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The KINEČKO

Slovak film magazine / No. 3 / 2014



still from *My Dog Killer*

Are you looking for an unforgettable experience with Slovak cinema? Even at the cost of no return? Then enter KINEČKO!

Introduction for first-time visitors to KINEČKO

For those who are entering our "little cinema" (literary translation of the word "Kinečko") for the first time, here is a short explanation of what to expect.

KINEČKO is a relatively young bimonthly magazine (founded in August 2010), which reflects cinema in the context of contemporary culture, presents a profound non-conformist analysis of film to the public, and supports writing about film as a relevant component of living cinema. It also serves as a source of information and a platform for unofficial, yet well-founded debate between contemporary filmmakers and critics. The target group for KINEČKO comprises film professionals, students, festival-goers, film club members, film enthusiasts, and those interested in sharing a bolder perspective on contemporary cinema. In February 2012 Kinečko published its first issue in English, and thus became the first Slovak film periodical aimed at foreign readers to present the small, yet ambitious Slovak cinema. So why "The" before the regular title of "Kinečko"? Because it sounds much more international, doesn't it?

We decided to dedicate the second issue of the international The Kinečko, released in February 2013, mainly to a reflection on Slovak cinema, but this time we are focusing on Slovak film periodicals. We wanted to introduce their distinctive features and the work of their respective editors: Slovak film critics and journalists. Each magazine (Kinečko, Film.sk, Kino_Ikon and Homo Felix) was given four pages in this issue to present themselves through their texts.

Now you are ready to proceed to the next introduction that will explain what you can expect from this brand new, already in its third issue, international The KINEČKO 3.

Introduction for experienced Kinečko readers

In a well-known film festival that was organised recently, we met a producer from Slovenia. (Just to make sure, I would like to remind you that Kinečko is from Slovakia, not from Slovenia). While having breakfast in the hotel, we were sharing classical stories of how people confuse our countries. But one of the stories was new to me and especially amusing: "Did you know that the Slovak and Slovene post offices meet regularly to exchange stray letters?" We thought that it would be a great idea for a coproduction project of our countries and we still haven't given up on the idea of carrying this out.

The source of this bitter humour, which we possibly also share with our Balkan almost-namesakes, is not only the resemblance in the names of our countries but also their little significance. Slovak cinema? Slovenian cinema? Who cares about the difference between 2 small beers...

This bitterness, which we are trying to capitalize on in the form of sexy humour, is however becoming somehow obsolete, since our countries have started to score in recent years. If not in local cinemas, then at least at international festivals. A rough reflection of current European, still post-communist society, is becoming a trademark of contemporary Slovak cinema.

In this issue of KINEČKO, we have decided to focus on Slovak cinema at international festivals, as well as at Slovak festivals. In what kind of Slovak films is the world interested? Why is it interesting for our filmmakers to make it to an international festival and how can it be achieved? What is better for our filmmakers? To be international or to be Slovak? What can we offer our foreign partners? And what can our festivals offer foreign filmmakers? We try to answer these and similar questions on following pages.

One question didn't need a lot of work to find the answer: it has been clear for a long time: Film, like any other art, is formed in dialogue and confrontation. Without distance, a look from the outside and dialogue with others there is no progress. After all, an insight into history confirms that too. The most fruitful period in the history of the former Czechoslovakian cinema was the New Wave, which spread from the Prague film school FAMU in the 60s. It was kicked off by students motivated by seeing films and lectures of the world's top filmmakers, which were "miraculously" smuggled behind the iron curtain by Professor Antonín Martin Brousil. (Richard Blech writes about the possibilities of artistic confrontation in those times in the article *Slovak Film and the World* in this issue of Kinečko.) Obviously, we are a little further on today, as shown for example in the joint text of several film journalists on "film journalism and festivals", which can be found a few pages further on, or the forthcoming international project of Kinečko magazine – a touring festival of short films from five European countries (Slovakia, Czech Republic, Poland, Austria and Hungary).

If you have an experience of or an opinion on Slovak cinema that you wish to share, or you would like to talk about Slovak cinema, participate with your own text in the international or the regular Slovak version of Kinečko magazine (as many of our international friends successfully did in the past), please let us know. Usually, we are somewhere around. Or at least on e-mail kinecko@kinecko.com.

EVA K

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BE HONEST with yourself about your film

“It’s really difficult, but once you have a clear and realistic vision of your work, there are numerous means to get it to the right audiences in many creative ways...and it’s not always big film festivals or regular cinemas.”



Alexandra Strelková and Katarína Tomková from SFI with their international colleagues. From left: Markéta Santráková (Czech Film Centre), AS, KT, Ina Rossow (sales agent / Deckert Distribution), Ivana Ivšic (PR agent of Velvet Terrorists).

Since 2006, the Slovak Film Institute has been a member of European Film Promotion (EFP) and is therefore a part of a network of more than thirty European film organisations promoting their national cinematographies. In Kinečko, we consider that with this move, as well as with the indefatigable and enthusiastic work of our friend and supporter Alexandra Strelková (AS)¹ and her colleague Katarína Tomková and other NCC (Slovak National Cinematographic Centre) colleagues, awareness of Slovak cinema has started to grow substantially. They are actively participating in projects and working groups; they are exchanging contacts, information and references on festivals, producers, media. And they always carry the international edition of Kinečko magazine.

EK: What is the role of the Slovak National Cinematographic Centre in placing Slovak films at film festivals and what is your place in this process?

AS: As with other film centres, our aim is to promote our Slovak films and assist them in getting as close as possible to film professionals and general audiences, especially abroad. This certainly entails good positioning of the films on the international film festival circuit. A good film centre should be the first and reliable contact point for festival programmers to call upon to find out which films there are for them to preview and consider. We should be able to present to them the most relevant and interesting information about our upcoming films, about our directors' and producers' works in progress, to know when those works can be seen, etc. There is a strict festival-deadline calendar for us to keep every year. Thus, on one hand we gather all the information, follow projects of Slovak films, preview films in their various stages, offer our “services” to producers when creating their festival strategy, consult, advise, ask them the basic important questions...; on the other hand, we make sure the information goes further, by keeping in touch with our film industry colleagues with updates on the films, making suggestions, submitting films directly, or connecting festivals and producers, etc.

And this is done in various ways ... with promotion materials, with newsletters and mailings, promotional stands at film markets, travelling and networking, personal contacts being, naturally, the most valuable and effective. It is also important for filmmakers themselves to follow what's happening in the festival world, watch films, travel, get to know people of the film industry, and create professional networks of their own. This can be mutually rewarding, and a benefit for our film centre, too. We also work with “older” films, from recent ones all the way back to the very beginning of our cinema. For showcases and retrospectives there are also rules and deadlines to follow. All in all, we try to be a relevant partner to both our filmmakers and our film festival colleagues, with the one aim of helping the films find their place.

All this work needs to be done, but in the end, it is the films that matter; they must be good and speak for themselves.

EK: At the Visegrad Film Forum, which took place in March in Bratislava, you hosted a debate dedicated to international film distribution. Even though the discussion was held on university grounds, you decided to skip any practical manual for fresh graduates to follow when dealing with international festivals.

Could you sum it up now?

AS: Well, our topic at VFF was “How to find the audience for your film?”, and, indeed, I did not want to present yet another workshop session on how to approach festivals, plan a film's release, on the declining numbers of cinemas and audiences, explain VOD, etc., but presumed these as facts to build upon. With the guests present – from various fields such as festivals, cinema distribution, TV channels, events, VOD platform, and PR & marketing – I found it more compelling and useful to talk about the topic like we usually do when we meet, just this time with an audience.

We often ask each other *How do you do it?, Why?, Does it work with your films / audiences?, I thought of combining this and that... would it work, in your opinion?*, and even though it seemed rather tough for the student audience to take in at times, there were some who came to me then, saying it was a good insight to the actual film industry. And that was the point: you need to know the industry you are about to enter, and realize how complex it is...it's important to do your homework, attend lectures and workshops, but, truly, that's just the basic toolkit.

I also think an attentive ear was able to trace quite some amount of practical advice. In my opinion, the most important was: Be honest with yourself about your film. It's really difficult, but once you have a clear and realistic vision of your work, there are numerous means to get it to the right audiences in many creative ways... and it's not always big film festivals or regular cinemas.

EK: What aspects are there to consider for a Slovak filmmaker when creating his/her festival strategy, and what is the reality compared to your vision?

AS: There is a festival for every film, but not every film is fit for every film festival. It is sometimes difficult to explain to filmmakers. The first rule is to be clear and honest about your film, as much as you can; producers especially should keep a certain distance from their “product” when planning the strategy. They should start as early as they have a clearer idea about the film's form and style, it is good to consult on the strategy – with us, with colleagues, even with festival people. Sometimes producers either do not consult at all, or consult too much and get confused. And it is also crucial to know when to present the film; to quote a festival programmer friend “The film is ready when it is ready”...

Once this is all clear, I would suggest they aim a level higher for a start.

The Slovak reality? The majority of active producers in Slovakia know the “rules” and more or less keep to them. There are some who don't, but there is always a reality check you can count on. And, of course, I may not always be right, and any pleasant surprise is welcome.

EK: Can you think of a film which was not aiming at big festivals but found success at smaller ones?

AS: This is difficult, as I really think a smaller festival can be big for some type of films. But let's take for example documentaries, such as *New Life* by Adam Ol'ha, premiered in Jihlava, also screened at, for example, Hot Docs, or *Normalization* by Robert Kirchner, with initial screenings in Warsaw, Jihlava and Leipzig. Both got a good response from juries and audiences, but afterwards it was the smaller and specialized festivals, that, in my opinion, gained them the most faithful and rewarding audiences. I saw the same happening to Jaro

Vojtek's films (*Here We Are*, *Border*) and I think it's good that way.

EK: What about the short *The Star* by Andrej Kolenčík. There is ongoing news on Facebook on its success in festivals...

AS: *The Star* is an interesting case study for me, and, it shows that a clever idea, a good, funny plot, interesting “packaging”, and active filmmakers, who are both realistic and bold, can make it to a great number of festivals and awards. It is also fair to say that there is not much credit we can take for the film's success, most of the work has been done by the filmmakers themselves, we only helped it to very few festivals of its extensive festival list.

Looking at the variety of festivals on the film's website (www.hviezdafilm.sk), honestly, I am a bit confused... but don't get me wrong, I really like the film and I like being confused! It's inspiring for my work, too.

Also makes me think of Remo's festival hit *Arsy-Versy!*

I'm glad for both, and it's a good reference when working with further films by Andrej Kolenčík or Miro Remo.

EK: ...in general, can you think of a recent fortunate case of a festival strategy?

AS: You may have the best possible strategy for your film, but there are always aspects which simply cannot be planned... and you also need *luck*: it takes a favourable constellation of stars...and programmers, timing, context of other films in pre-selection... And we have cases where all these factors worked in our favour: *Blind Loves* in Cannes' Director's Fortnight (2008), *Moon Inside You* in Locarno's Critics' Week (2009), *The House* in Berlin's Forum (2011), *My Dog Killer* in Rotterdam (2013)... Lately, we have had a nice fortunate case of the *Velvet Terrorists*, opening regionally in Karlovy Vary, which was also the producers' wish, and from there *directly* to Forum in Berlin... rather unusual, right? But things like that happen...and in all cases, the producers gave it serious thought and made efforts to fulfil their plans. And, were also lucky to succeed.

EK: Speaking of *Velvet Terrorists*, it also makes a difference for a film to have a sales agent. Can a filmmaker find a sales agent for his film even if his name is not Peter Kerekes?

AS: Sales agents have a say and are valid in the film's international life. Any filmmaker can find a sales agent if they have the right film. The sales business is now changing a lot, so are the festivals. Sometimes producers do not consider the sales point of view when offering their film to a sales representative and think more of the festival service for their film. That, however, is just one part of the story, and the priorities and interests of sales people are, naturally, more complex. Agents and us sometimes differ on the festival strategies, but in general, what is good for the film is good for us, too. We respect the agents, and always like to keep good contacts with them, find agreement and be their partners in the film's promotion.

EK: In Austria, the distribution company six-packfilm is specialized in independent and experimental cinema. Do Slovak independent films have any chance of getting international attention?

AS: Why not? Sixpackfilm is doing basically the same promotion and event work that we are doing, but in a more detailed and specialized way. I think that in Slovakia we already have space for specialized independent “film centres”, e.g. for documentaries, shorts, even experimental films (not my speciality, I have to admit), etc.

The film centre within the Slovak Film Institute is a national one, relatively young (11 years), small, working on the official level with recent films, but also with Slovak film archives, which represent a great deal of our activities. We try to cover everything, but, it is not really possible, is it?

In my opinion, it's time for us to have partners within the Slovak film industry. I very much appreciate the great amount of work done by Slovak animators, who found a way to organize themselves, produce, promote and present their films; animation festival Fest Anča has been helpful, too. I very much feel the lack of partners for documentary films and for shorts.

EK: To conclude with something different: How do you envisage the future of Slovak film festivals?

AS: Well, my simplifying view of our festivals at the moment, except for the smaller specialized ones, is that they have a relatively easy film-life... they are mostly well curated, but, let's be honest, no matter what their programme, it's interesting for us; it's quality art-house, awarded films, some topical side-bars, and we come and watch as much as we can. However, even if we have foreign filmmakers and film professionals here, very little exchange and networking is happening.

In terms of international presence at our festivals, there is almost none.

So, for the future, I would imagine our festivals having a “face”, which would travel and represent them and us abroad, be our partner in film promotion, have more continuity, be visible throughout the year, not only during their festival week, create more possibilities of exchange, for creating ties with Slovak cinema, something special which would make foreign guests want to come back and also spread the word. To this end, also the Slovak film community should get together, show interest, attend any “attempt” at such tie-creating, comment, support, help make it better.

And I think they should show more of the film archives, in interesting specialized programmes and retrospectives of foreign and also Slovak films.

EK: This Kinečko issue addresses foreign readers. What would you like to tell them about Slovak films?

AS: Having read Kinečko, they probably have the information they need. I'd like your readers to watch our films... be ready to help them with selection and access... and come back and tell me what *they* think.

Come and see us in our stand in Berlin, the pavilion in Cannes, email us, any ideas, feedback and advice is always much appreciated!

www.sfu.sk, www.aic.sk, cinecentre@sfu.sk

EVA K

1 Alexandra Strelková is the director of the National Cinematographic Centre of the Slovak Film Institute, which is divided into: Film Events Department, Editorial Department and Audiovisual Information Centre. The work of the Centre consists of collecting and providing comprehensive information and services related to Slovak cinema, presenting Slovak films at home and abroad, promoting film events of foreign cinematographies in Slovakia, as well as issuing general and specialized filmological publications within the SFI's editorial activity.

What does a Slovak POM get up to?

“If I hadn’t gone to SFS Uherské Hradiště with my short film *Thanks, Fine* in 2010, maybe I wouldn’t be working on the film *Mirage* with Szabolcs Hajdu...”

Since 2000, European Film Promotion (EFP) has offered support and guidance to European producers during the Cannes International Film Festival. In a highly selective process, one producer per country is chosen by the respective EFP member to take part in this initiative, which has set a high standard for participation. EFP creates a tightly focused working environment involving project pitchings, 1:1 meetings as well as extensive promotion of the producers via profiles in the international trade papers. After Marek Veselický, Marko Škop, Peter Kerekes, Silvia Panáková, Miroslav Kollár and Mira Fornay, Mátyás Prikler (MP) is Slovak Producer On the Move (POM) 2014. Mátyás is director of the short *Thanks, Fine* (Cannes Cinéfondation selection in 2010), director and the producer of feature *Fine, Thanks* (2013), producer of the brand new episodic film *Slovakia 2.0* and co-producer of *Mirage* by Hungarian director Szabolcs Hajdu. We asked him a few questions about the importance of being a “producer on the move”.

K: Do you have any feedback from producers who participated in POM last year?

MP: I talked to Peter Kerekes, who went to POM some time ago and to Andrea Taschler, who represented Hungary last year. Both of them told me that it’s good to go there, important meetings can happen. But they also told me not to have excessive expectations.

K: Which project do you want to present in Cannes?

MP: Well, I want to present finished, or nearly finished films produced by MPhilms: *Slovakia 2.0*, *Children* and *Mirage*, where I figure as minor co-producer. I would also like to present a film we work on, *Without guardian angels*, directed by Róbert Lakatos. Ideally, this will be a Romanian-Hungarian-Slovakian co-production.

K: What do international festivals mean to you as a Slovak director and producer, and what do you expect from them in the near future?

MP: International festivals generate a certain platform, where one can get to know films and filmmakers from other countries. What I prefer is when the festival is about films. It is often the only possibility for filmmakers to get to know their peers and eventually establish cooperation. Sometimes it can even lead to fateful meetings. For example, if I hadn’t gone to SFS Uherské Hradiště with my short film *Thanks, Fine* in 2010, maybe I wouldn’t be working on the film *Mirage* with Szabolcs Hajdu now...

K: What would you improve in Slovak film festivals?

MP: I don’t know if I’m in the best position to comment. Slovak festivals perhaps aren’t in an ideal situation when it comes to financing and it would be naïve to think, that we will build up an A category festival in a couple of years. Art Film Fest is possibly the most important one. I think that under the direction of Peter Nágel, the festival profiles itself very well. I like that the team presents auteur films and doesn’t make unnecessary compromises. Cinematik festival is taking shape, we will see which direction they will go in. The most problematic is Bratislava IFF. I don’t exactly know what is going on there, but the festival is losing its way a bit. And then there are a few very important small festivals. I personally like the seminar 4 Elements in Banská Štiavnica a lot.

KINEČKO

► August 19 – 30, 2013
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Eva and Eva on the SOFA

Participants of the very first edition of SOFA, source: SOFA

Eva K, editor in chief and Eva PA, producer of *Kinečko* magazine, sat on a SOFA last summer and now the time has come to explain why to our international readers.

EVAK: Hi, Evi, how was your weekend at the yacht club?

EVAP: Wonderful, you know we have a private beach and the garden is slowly becoming a botanical garden. I lay on the beach and relaxed. And how was your weekend at the hacienda?

EVAK: Working, you know, as we are preparing two issues of *Kinečko* at the same time – for Slovak and international readers. And when I decided to let off steam with a quick touch of gardening, it started pouring. But let’s get down to business. Can you explain to our international readers, how we came to the SOFA and what is it? So that they don’t think that it’s some kind of psychotherapy for cultural workaholics.

EVAP: SOFA is an abbreviation of School of Film Agents, founded by Nikolaj Nikitin. I would call it a further education for young film professionals from Central and Eastern Europe, Germany and Caucasus. We spent two very intense weeks full of lectures and consultations, which resulted in the development of our project Film Generation, aimed at educating high-school students in art-house cinema. The workshop took place in a castle in Wrocław, and the conditions were perfect to focus on the development of our project, which we presented at SOFA just in the form of an idea. It was not just the two of us (even though we were the only ones with one exception to participate in a pair). Evi, do you remember our fellow companions?

EVAK: Of course I remember. I often meet many of them at festivals, I contact them if I need information about the audiovisual sector of the country of their origin. I am looking forward to meeting most of them in Cannes. So, the participants from last year in Wrocław were namely Melinda Boros from Romania (project TIFF Studio Workshops), Gábor Böszörményi from Hungary (project Program your favourite art-house cinemas), Keti Danelia from Georgia (project Unique Screen), Leana Jalukse from Estonia (project DocTok), Ivan Vasylivych Kozlenko2 from Ukraine (project Ukrainian National Film Museum), Jan Naszewski from Poland (project of short film production called Film Incubator), Johannes Rexin (project of a German-Polish festival TransOdra), Mira Staleva from Bulgaria (project Bulgarian Film Promotion), Sonja Topalovic from Serbia (project Festival Box Office) and us with our project Film Generation. So, Evi, would you like to try to repeat our pitch on Film Generation?

EVAP: Film Generation is a year-round interactive film course for high schools in various Slovak towns, finishing with a film festival organised by the students in a local cinema. An optional afternoon course for students takes place every week in the local cinema, under the guidance of the teacher. It is divided into two semesters. The first semester is focused on the introduction to the world of cinema, history of world and Slovak cinema, basics of film analysis, practical workshops and lectures with filmmakers. The second semester is focused on the organisation of a film festival in a local cinema at the end of the school year. Every first week is devoted to key works of world and national cinema and to topics related to film. Part of the course consists of discussions, writing essays about films, formulating expert introductions to films.

Together with teachers, guest experts (such as filmmakers, film theorists from Slovakia and neighbouring countries) lead the workshops. Screenings during the school year are free and open to the public. Project Film Generation also includes two courses for teachers. The first one will take place before the course for students (in August). It’s mainly focused on the history of film, film analysis, screenings and discussions about films selected for the student course as well as getting acquainted with didactic materials for courses with students, and participation in a one-day course on shooting. The second week-long course will take place before the start of the second semester, right after the teachers visit one of the existing festivals in Slovakia or in a neighbouring country. It will be focused on screenings and discussions about films prepared

for the second semester, consultation of didactic materials and the actual organisation of a festival in a local cinema. The festival, which will take place at the end of the second semester in a local cinema will be organised by students along with their teacher during the second semester. Part of the preparation consists of selecting four to six current author films from around the world (students can choose from fourteen films, which will be screened to them during the school year). The students, led by the teacher, guest tutors and project coordinators, will prepare the festival programme, take care of production side of the event, prepare supporting materials, invite an international guest (a filmmaker), lead discussions about films, provide introductions to films, and take care of transport of film copies and promotion of the festival. We are currently working on the development of didactic materials with three Slovak high schools in Bratislava, Rimavská Sobota and Banská Štiavnica.

Evi, except for Film Generation, what did SOFA give you?

EVAK: Except for my yoga mat, which I unfortunately left on the train on the way back to Bratislava and the many important contacts and information I acquired, it is mostly a very positive and motivating feeling from meeting with people like ourselves, but from different parts of Europe. In principle, I understood the meaning of the word “film agent”, which was very vague for me before. It is indeed quite an adventurous profession, where only a few people appreciate and understand what you are actually doing and why. Actually, it is a bit like James Bond. The uninitiated think that you are simply sucking up funds, you watch films, travel the world and drink rosé. And that you worm your way in everywhere. After all, you already have a magazine (like we have *Kinečko*), why do you need a distribution company (like our FILMTOPIA), a film festival (like our Fest Anča) and a cinema (like our Foajé)? But that’s exactly the essence of a film agent in countries where cinema doesn’t flourish by itself. A film agent tries to agitate and support the film environment at all levels, to open and maintain channels between various sectors of the audiovisual environment. But an agent is passionate and tireless, she or he works seven days a week for what really is not a lot of money. So when one agent meets another at SOFA, and they look each other in the eye, this rare understanding might one day lead to something like “the end of the Cold War” at the level of creative Europe.

EVA AND EVA

- 1 Our lecturers were Oliver Baumgarten, film critic and founder of the FilmPlus festival, Claudia Dillmann, directress of the German Film Institute, founder of goEast - Festival of Central and Eastern European film, Fatima Djoumer from Europa Cinéma, Marion Döring from European Film Academy, Roman Gutek, the founder of Polish the leading art-house film distribution company Gutek Film, as well as founder of New Horizons IFF festival and the American Film Festival in Wrocław, Sibylle Kurz, pitching expert, Marta Materska-Samek from Polish Cinema Development Foundation, Karel Och, artistic director of the IFF Karlovy Vary, Polish producer Ewa Puszczynska from an independent film production company Opus Film, Renaud Redien-Collot, professor of entrepreneurship and social innovation and Director of International Affairs at Novancia Business School, Thorsten Ritter from the world sales company Beta Cinema, Renate Rose from European Film Promotion, Katriel Schory, director of the Israeli Film Fund and Gudrun Sommer, director of film festival doxsl!, documentaries for children and youth in Duisburg.
- 2 If only Ivan’s beautiful project to promote Ukrainian culture hadn’t disappeared in the turmoil of political unrest...

Blurring of national and local specificities

as a side effect of successful festival distribution of contemporary Slovak film

The effect of global growth of the phenomena of festivals and the increasing importance of prestige and marketing completed the alienation of 'nation' from the 'national'. The national became a free-floating semantic unit used within the festival discourse in order to market new cinematographies.

Marijke De Valck

Slovak documentary director Peter Kerekes while shooting the film *Velvet Terrorists*, photo: Martin Kollár

When the producer of the film *Miracle* suddenly cancelled its long expected February premiere, and postponed it till autumn because an important international film festival showed interest in the film, it caused a subtle but still notable wave of negative reactions. The international festival audience was preferred over the local one, the latter being the tax payers whose investment into the production seemed thereby belittled. It was as if the fact wasn't considered that in globalized Europe it doesn't seem to matter whether the tax payer pays for his own ticket or if he pays for a spectator in another European country. Nor was the fact that the number of spectators for an "art" film in Slovakia, or in another Eastern European countries, is not sufficient to make its production economically viable. For various reasons, film festivals became the main distribution channels of European non-commercial cinema. Channels that are in principal multinational and transcultural, even though the festivals are structured differently, based on their size, interest, topic (e.g. Queer festivals), genre (e.g. Documentary film festivals) or their regional affiliation. It is striking what an important percentage of audiences one can miss when evaluating the film attendance – roughly speaking the whole festival audience.¹

Film festivals are crucial for distribution of non-commercial Slovak cinema. In the case of the creative production team *Artileria* with director Juraj Lehotský, the notion of festival success of his previous film – *Blind Loves* – also resonates. Nomination and award in the Director's Fortnight section at one of the three oldest and most prominent festivals, Festival de Cannes² put the creative team in a flagship position for Slovak cinema in the field of international representation. Hence, some part of the public expects them to continue in their festival success story. But that requires strategy, built on a widely structured regulation of the international world of cinema, rather than on the expectations of home spectators, whose current behaviour film professionals and distributors can hardly predict.

Based on Jana Dudková's assumption on a self-colonisation myth of the non-existent Slovak cinema³ that recently substituted the myth of an awakening cinema, Lehotský becomes, with a slight application of hyperbole, a national hero, responsible for higher representative goals of our "traumatised" culture and towards the people – regular local spectators.

Producers often inform about selection for a prominent festival to communicate with the local audience. The national premiere is therefore held back until after a famous festival programmes the film. However, in terms of distribution, international festivals don't have a significant impact on local audiences. In fact, the selection of a film on a festival program is beneficial for the producer mainly because of the sales of rights to foreign TV companies. It also means a certain rise in the credibility of

the author who can then profit from it in the future, in communication with various project committees, etc. Of course, the selection for a prestigious festival is also a reward for several years of work, and brings the authors significant personal satisfaction. For the filmmakers, festivals also represented a certain asylum or at least an impartial objectifying look from the outside in cases where their films couldn't achieve this in their own country, for political or various other reasons (not based on aesthetic criteria).

Juraj Lehotský's most recent title figures at the beginning of this article as *pars pro toto* of international distributional ambitions due to the reaction of the audience, thus its potential box-office success. The attempt to have an international premiere before the national distribution screening has become a standard. The same practice was implemented last year by *Thanks, Fine, My Dog Killer*, or the documentary *Velvet Terrorists*.⁴

Festival cinema is becoming a platform per se, free from concrete geographical and historical connotations, despite using these as a part of brand building. According to Thomas Elsaesser, a film historian of German origin, who is focusing on cinema in the transition period of its globalisation, "*this originally European phenomenon has globalized itself, and in the process has created not only a self-sustaining, highly self-referential world for the art cinema, the independent cinema and the documentary film, but a sort of "alternative" to the Hollywood Studio system in its post-Fordist phase*".⁵

In the following text, I will try to analyse the common features of films that are predestined for a festival path. In the conclusion I will reflect upon the exceptions that don't necessarily need to prove the rule.

Miracle, like its generational fellows *Thanks, Fine, Made in Ash, My Dog Killer* and *Exhibits or Stories from the Castle*, is a social drama. The current form of this genre in the discourse of Slovak film reflection is based upon certain typical practices of form and content.

From a formal point of view, it is mostly the casting of non-actors, a minimum of dialogues, attempts to narrate via images, fragmentation of space by camera and editing, minimum of non-diegetic music, and a minimum of stylised sound design. In this context it would be wrong to leave in the shadow of directors their colleagues and film professionals from the same generation, such as camera operators (Ján Meliš, Noro Hudec, Tomáš Stanek, Peter Balcar), editors (Maroš Šlapeta, František Kráhenbiel) or sound engineers (Dušan Kozák, Tobiáš Potočný).

From a content point of view, Slovak social drama of the last two years is characterised by a breaking of the narrative arc, focusing on marginalised societies and geographical regions, displaying pathological symptoms of society without romanticising specificities. A certain homogeneity of the current social

drama is due to collaboration with the dramatist Marek Leščák.

Both levels, form and content, are linked by the disruption of the traditional definition of the boundaries between feature and documentary genres. The auteur film being the nominal currency of the festival world, the division into feature and documentary seems as irrelevant as the presence or absence of the elements referring to, or even forming the national or historical identity.

The term authenticity is as ambivalent as realism. While the spectator often defines the audiovisual discourse of realism as boring, depressive and obscure, authenticity leans more towards the proclaimed non-compromising auteur testimony, that is a must for films destined for festivals. According to Thomas Elsaesser: "*The emphasis on the author as the nominal currency of the film festival economy has proven a very useful shield behind which both the festival and its audiences have been able to negotiate different priorities and values*".⁶ This framework, completed by the category of directorial debut or second film, or various combinations of these two conditions, entitles films to apply for the competition and non-competition sections of first class festivals. In comes the so-called festival strategy, created by a responsible person, mainly the film producer, ideally in cooperation with the official sales agent and the national film centre. In our circumstance it's The National Cinematographic Centre of the Slovak Film Institute. The aim is to create the most appropriate "life journey" of the film, based on the calculations derived from the above mentioned author's "nominal currency".

Central European identity as a ticket to festivals

Central and Eastern Europe have specific sections in several festivals (e.g. East to the West at Karlovy Vary IFF). In others, the advantage in the fight for awards is the placement in the prestigious competition or non-competition sections (like the Berlinale Forum). Some festivals, for example goEast Wiesbaden, officially declare their preferential focus on this region. goEast in cooperation with the Robert Bosch Stiftung also does it through financial support for the co-production between young filmmakers from Germany and Eastern and South-East Europe. Other funds (The Hugo Bals Fund, Tribeca Film Institute, Doha IFF) affiliated to international film festivals, or financial awards for projects on co-production forums and workshops also help to shape future programmes for their festivals. "This way of film development adds a brand new meaning to the term 'festival film'. Not only these films are made to be circulated in festivals, they are partially produced (and culturally confirmed)" by the latter", argues Elsaesser's follower Marijke de Valck. She demonstrates that the term festival film is not a mass media

cliché, but a special and consciously built commodity.

In the world of prestigious festivals, except for the above mentioned authors' nominal currency, political engagement and correctness, or incorrectness in specific cases, also plays its role. We can't forget that the most respected European festivals, which are the most interesting for auteur films, were always founded and transformed in the name of a political idea⁸. "The intentions of the new generation of festival programmers were both sincere and, in the case of presenting/supporting new, national political cinemas, the result of a somewhat belated urge to explore ("discover") the cinematic hinterlands"⁹ claimed De Valck on the topic of penetration of festival programmers into Third World countries. The interest of Western European festival programmers is aimed at our region on a similar basis. It is therefore interesting to observe the reaction of our filmmakers and the whole national audiovisual environment.¹⁰

The term of self-colonisation, which our film theorist Jana Dudková takes from the Bulgarian culture theorist Alexander Kiossev in order to further develop its meaning in the discourse of Slovak post-revolutionary cinema, takes on a pragmatic dimension in this context. Since Dudková stresses the metaphorical dimension of this term and its fluidity in its basics, and she further opens it to a new discourse, we can also try to use it to name the efforts of today's filmmakers to meet the demands of the current festival system. Even though she further develops other aspects of self-colonisation, Dudková also mentions, that "in terms of reflection of transmodern self-colonisation it is significant that the financing of several Slovak documentary films was based on the ability to attract the committees of European funding grants and creative workshops, or eventually gain the sympathy of programming teams of international festivals."¹¹

The political idea of reflection of problems of the ex-socialist bloc is one of the key and most established rules of the game called the international film festival. Into this game the filmmaker enters as a player in the costume of an Eastern European or Central European, which brings to the altar of a globalized cultural ritual the metonymy of his Eastern European or Central European identity in the form of ostracised entities of society, some sort of products of globalized Europe. It is also a cleansing ritual, where the waste material of European economy and politics gets recycled in the form of authors' work and its recognition within the international context. In the words of De Valck: "The effect of the global spread of the film festival phenomenon and the increasing importance of distinction and marketing completed the detachment between "the national" and "the nation". The national has become a free-floating signifying unit that is used in the festival discourse to market new cinemas."¹²

I will again take *Miracle* as an example. The

film is set in an unnamed Central or Eastern European town. The fact that the greater part of the film was shot in Czech town Aš, at the same location as its predecessor, Iveta Grófová's *Made in Ash*, is irrelevant in this case. Because of the language of the protagonist, the film is actually taking place in another country than the real one in front of the cameras. The memory of that place, stored by the reproductive properties of the media, diverges from the memory footprint, that the film as a fiction leaves behind. The fact that the heroine comes from a social and geographical periphery is important for the narration of the film. The authors locate the story in a castle-children's home, a dump of globalized Europe, not unlike the dormitory in *Made in Ash*, or the retirement home in Palo Korec's film *Exhibits or Stories from the Castle*.

In *Thanks, Fine* (d. Mátýás Prikler), the protagonist brings the audience to the retirement home from the outside. Unlike in *Exhibits* and *Miracle*, in this case we follow the process and the source where the ostracised (non)hero comes from to the (non)place of his destiny. Prikler's approach belongs to the category of 'politically incorrect'; he shows a majority Central European in his cynicism, he analyses the process of origination of the waste material of globalized Europe without romanticising. Director and producer in one, he slaps not only the society in the face but himself as well. The screening of Prikler's feature debut had exposure similar to Lehotský's *Miracle* – successful release of his short film (with the same name) in Cannes (in Prikler's case in Cinéfondation section). But the festival of festivals, the creator of established European "authors" didn't welcome any of the candidates with their feature debuts. Therefore, Juraj Lehotský's feature debut opened the Eastern European section of last year's Karlovy Vary IFF and Prikler's *Thanks, Fine*, challenging even for festival audiences, was accepted by the most non-conformist section in the world of prominent European festivals – Bright Future of the Dutch International Film Festival Rotterdam. *Miracle* got a special mention in Karlovy Vary¹³, *Thanks, Fine* was not awarded yet. *Miracle* was screened at the Toronto International Film Festival (currently one of the most important film markets). Since Rotterdam and the subsequent release at Premiers Plans Angers, *Thanks, Fine* has participated at Eastern and Central European festivals of minor relevance, considering its starting point.¹⁴

Mira Fornay (director) and Juraj Buzalka (producer) of the film *My Dog Killer*, managed a more dynamic festival path¹⁵. The film received one of three main awards in Rotterdam – the Hivos Tiger Award. This opened the doors to other prestigious festivals. Fornay doesn't show the impact of a political-economic system, which had been being built since the post-war years, on a synecdoche that could be fitted or brought into an institutionalised space limited by four walls. Her psychiatric institution suffered an explosion and the patients are dispersed in the surrounding vineyards and villages with no identity and no name. Fornay's protagonists are the ideal players for a high-level festival game from the author's as well as the political point of view, both joined in an inseparable whole. The balance of negative and positive sides of the characters creates human heroes of not entirely Aristotelian type, but it brings an inner drama to an almost non-action plot. We are in the area of a not entirely black-and-white view of the state of Central and Eastern Europe, in the state after the Second World War, later the Cold War and finally after the attempt to establish a democratic system. *My Dog Killer* is the conscience of Europe, sufficiently graspable and open for a game with the participation of spectators, thanks to the main character – the film is the right sacrifice at the international altar of a successful festival recycling.

Locally or globally

Let's think about what would happen if an author decided to abandon the rules of the game and tried to make a film close to the local

Slovak spectator. Would it be a success also in the international, thus primarily festival context? I will try to illustrate my reflection with two examples.

In the first case, an optimistic producer and director believed, that with his title *Tigers in the City* he can attract both target groups. He developed the film's marketing strategy (from cast of actors, music, a renowned French DOP, to promotion materials) in the framework of international workshops (MAIA) and he built the film structure based on a usually correct ratio of local (Bratislava realities, famous Slovak faces and songs) and European (experimentation with narration, attempt at comedy genre). But the local public, as well as more significant film festivals reacted mildly to *Tigers in the City*. The ambitious attempt of a Slovak version of *Amelie* remained a construct, not believable for either side. In order to win the festival game, *Tigers in the City* lacked just the right combination of author's position and political engagement. Only a deeper case study, which would include a survey of spectators' opinions of the film as well as an evaluation of distribution strategy and effective planning of screenings in cinemas, would explain what was missing in order to convince higher numbers of local spectators. In the second case, the authors of an ambitious local cinema hit didn't seek compromise. In spite of what seems to be an apparently universal and current topic, *The Candidate* (an adaptation of a novel by Maroš Hečko and Michal Havran) directed by the film debutant and advertising professional Jonáš Karásek, has a closed structure, a micro-world of local references to offscreen Bratislava realities, that can be fully understood only by a spectator who knows the context of local socio-political-intellectual causes, communities and local discourses. What makes *The Candidate* interesting isn't the stereotypical framework of a political thriller but the nontransferable way of sarcastic "glossing". The authors of the film didn't entirely give up on the possibility of presenting the film at festivals, they deliberately favoured the local spectator and a strategy for Slovak cinema distribution over the rules of the festival game.

However, I don't consider the polarity of these two approaches and the impossibility of combining the local and the international as universally valid. In his publication *European Cinema Face to Face with Hollywood* from 2005, Elsaesser provides examples that we also know very well and that would completely refute such a statement:

"Films made in Europe (and indeed in other smaller, film-producing nations) tend to display the markers of their provenance quite self-consciously. The emphasis on region, neighbourhoods and the local in recent successes such as *The Full Monty*, *Billy Elliot*, *Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown*, *Cinema Paradiso*, *Goodbye Lenin*, *Amelie*, provides access-points for the international and global cinema markets, which includes the national audience, thoroughly internationalised through the films on offer in cineplexes and videotheques."¹⁶

Nearly ten years after the publication of Elsaesser's book, I should like to add a few titles to this list, such as *Lost in Translation*, *Vicky Cristina Barcelona*, or a completely timeless *Night on Earth*. I am not able to chase away the idea that this type of penetration of artistic quality and exploitation of "the goods of origin" is becoming an increasingly rare phenomenon, not only in our region. It is therefore proper to consider a certain confidence in the presentation of the local and also in the exemption from the imperative linkage between filmmakers and political opinion from a form, which was recently fixed into the diverse genre of social drama specified above.

In addition to the analysed pragmatic operation with the authors' nominal currency for the purposes of significant international film festivals, it is most probably also a manifestation of generational defiance of the trade with the superficially attractive, let's say tourist sites of local origin.¹⁷

Between these two extreme positions we can discover various ways of processing the local, deepened by the actual (often also social) view

and at the formal level also a self-reflexive and alienating reminder of the illusion of media or of the trend of so-called "blurring of lines" between documentary and fiction.

The graduate film by Peter Zákufanský (Audiovisual Studies graduate at the Film and Television Faculty of the Academy of Performing Arts) *The Stop on Main Street* is worth mentioning. Not because it's suitable for a case study on a realised successful distribution at festivals or in home cinemas, nor because it represents a mature work in form and content. The film is interesting for being a seed of a certain tendency, which is based on the local, geographical, social and cultural roots on one side and an opening to an international context via combination of artistic testimony, creative essay format and internationally resonating film reference to the Award-winning film *The Shop on Main Street* on the other side.

Its theme naturally grows from the memory of a concrete place, where it is firmly anchored. On other levels it grows into universally understandable discourses, though those aren't based on an explicit reflection of a "periphery" of contemporary Europe. Another interesting aspect is the effort of the authors to get their film to smaller festivals by themselves and not to rely on the Festival department of the Film and Television Faculty of the Academy of Performing Arts. The film director Peter Zákufanský didn't try to get his film to Berlinale or Cannes, but on social networks he can now promote his photograph from the Award ceremony at the International Students Film Festival in Cluj – Napoca, Romania, where Cristi Puiu hands him the award.

Even more benefits for local film propagation thanks to festival activities go to the authors of another small, though no longer a student, film, *The Exhibition* (directed by Peter Begányi and Andrej Kolenčík, 2013). The social pages of this film are literally inundated with information on the selection for programs of international festivals, beginning with the Audience Award from Czech Febiofest 2013.

At the end of this brief overview of local and global (or European) and audience and festival tendencies of current Slovak cinema we need to mention that, in fact, these two aspects are in a dialectical rather than a confrontational relation. One shouldn't underestimate the positives that a success at international film festivals can bring to our audiovisual environment while building up healthy self-esteem. This could result in diversity in genres, styles or audience targeting, as well as in complementary development of spectators habits, programming structure of cinemas, marketing communication of Slovak film, or legislation in favour of production or distribution of Slovak films. Development of such a complex system is possible in case our filmmakers don't "design" their films to meet the requirements of major festivals, but rather plan specific ways of presentation of their authentic creations, which may be of interest even if they aren't directed straight at the "mecca" of festival industry.

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- 1 This problematic is reflected in the complex global project of Serbian distributor Sonja Topalović, which should make available the information on visit-rate of all the festival screenings through an internationally connected web portal – at present in development phase. (www.sofa2013.org/projects-participants)
- 2 The list of all the certified festivals and their categorisation by their competition sections and specialisation is published on the web page of the International Federation of Film Producers Associations (www.fiapf.org). The level of prestige of festivals depends mainly on the historical tradition, size and relevance of the film market, which takes place alongside the festival.
- 3 Dudková bases the trauma of the non-existent Slovak cinema on Kiossev's hypothesis of traumatised cultures suffering from absence of their own

tradition in arts, education, literary achievements etc. (in his case Bulgaria). See: Dudková, Jana. Slovak cinema in the era of transculturality. Vlna, Drewo a srd, VŠMU. Bratislava 2011 and Kiossev, A.: Notes on the Self-colonising Cultures, In: Profil, 3/2008, p. 10.

- 4 In this particular case, a rare combination of a double festival premiere occurred. In order to succeed internationally, the international distributor first presented the film in a regional premiere at Karlovy Vary IFF. The film was then distributed locally and screened on RTVS (Slovak public television). Surprisingly, it was later re-premiered internationally at Berlinale, and distributed in local cinemas in a second wave.
- 5 Elsaesser, Thomas: European cinema - Face to face with Hollywood, University of Amsterdam, p. 88.
- 6 Elsaesser, Thomas: European cinema - Face to face with Hollywood, University of Amsterdam, p. 101.
- 7 De Valck, M.: Film Festivals - From European geopolitics to global cinephilia, Amsterdam University Press 2007, p. 181.
- 8 The topic of the political background of the foundation of the oldest festivals such as Venice, Cannes or Berlinale is treated in above mentioned publication European cinema - Face to face with Hollywood by Thomas Elsaesser. Marijke De Valck expands this discourse to the emergence of specialised sections at these festivals (e.g. Berlinale Forum) - see Chapter Thematic festivals in the above mentioned publication Film Festivals - From European geopolitics to global cinephilia.
- 9 De Valck, M.: Film Festivals - From European geopolitics to global cinephilia, Amsterdam University Press 2007, p. 179.
- 10 Apart from the actual adaptation of content and form of the films on the part of their makers, it is worth mentioning the selection of authors, and eventually their concrete works, to the detriment of others, within the presentation of the so called Golden Fund of National Cinema abroad. Let us think of the rich and varied filmography of Peter Solan, which is crouching in the shadow of one, the most understandable film in the international context from the ideological point of view - *The Boxer*.
- 11 Dudková, Jana. Slovak film in the era of transculturality. Vlna, Drewo a srd, VŠMU. Bratislava 2011, p. 102.
- 12 De Valck, M.: Film Festivals - From European geopolitics to global cinephilia, Amsterdam University Press 2007, p. 72.
- 13 Followed by release at film festivals in Toronto (Canada), Haifa (Israel), Denver (USA), Thessaloniki (Greece), Cottbus (Germany, Best Actress Award), Arras (France, Grand Prix), Mucos (Spain), IFF Plus Camerimage (Poland), EUFF - European Union Film Festival (Canada), Black Nights (Estonia), Luxor Film Festival (Egypt) and Premiers Plans (France), etc.
- 14 Titanic in Budapest, IFF Transilvania in Cluj, Slovak ArtFilmFest, Serbian Palic European Film Festival, Uherské Hradiště Summer Film School (The Czech Republic), FILMTETTIESZT - Hungarian Film Days (Romania), Film Indian Summer / Babie lato filmowe, Molodist (Ukraine) and so far the last Trieste Film Festival (Italy)
- 15 IFF Rotterdam (The Netherlands), IFF Busan (South Korea), IFF Warsaw (Poland), IFF Sao Paolo (Brazil, South American premiere), IFF Seattle and AFI LA (USA, North American premiere), IFF Edinburgh, IFF Karlovy Vary (The Czech Republic) etc. Awards: Special Award - FF Split 2013, CineVision Award - IFF Munich 2013, Best Director - IFF Zerkalo 2013, Best Film, Best Actor - Finále Plzeň 2013, Special Mention - FF Titanic 2013, Best Director - IFF Vilnius 2013, Hivos Tiger Award - IFF Rotterdam 2013
- 16 Elsaesser, Thomas: European cinema - Face to face with Hollywood, University of Amsterdam, p. 82.
- 17 I focused on this defiance as a reaction to the wave of so called "lifestyle films" in the text: Slovak Films on the Screens - Aesthetic and pragmatic aspects of current distribution of Slovak audiovisual works, In: Slovenské divadlo, No.: 2/2013, Institute of Theatre and Film Research, SSN 0037-699X, p. 167-181.

Festival life in Slovakia

Events such as film festivals represent a very important part of the cinematographic landscape. They are the countries' celebrations, which are not only keeping their cinema alive but representing it to the outside. It is important for national cinematographies that film festivals would regularly celebrate all genres and sorts of cinema. Slovakia is a small country where the audiovisual environment is newly developing¹; if we had a celebration like the Cannes IFF, it would be a miracle, considering our Slovak cinematographic past. Nevertheless, Slovak film festivals can contribute strongly not only to the broadening of audiences and to training and presentation of film professionals, but to the creation of the image of Slovak cinema abroad. This would be the ideal case. But reaching the ideal is always a slow process (Slovakia is only 20 years old), and the way is never easy. Of course, Slovak festivals also have their limits. Some complain about these limits, but others transform these limits into very original ideas and forms of organising a festival.

I. The Oldest

The oldest film festival in our country is the Ekotopfilm, founded in 1973. It is co-organised by the Government and focuses exclusively on environmental topics. Even though the context of ecology is very important for society, the topic is to the detriment of the quality of films.

II. The Biggest

The second oldest festival is Art Film Fest, which since 1993² has taken place every year in the spa town of Trenčianske Teplice and has gradually grown to reach the nearest city Trenčín, where the greater part of the programme takes place nowadays. It was founded as a chamber screening of documentaries about art in a single cinema in a very difficult time of the 90s, when there was practically no local cinema in Slovakia. At present, it is the biggest film festival with an international competition of first, second and third feature films and an international competition of short films up to 30 minutes.³ Currently, the festival holds a firm position amongst film events. Its red carpet is visited by 20,000 visitors every year. The models of this festival are the biggest festivals like Cannes IFF and Karlovy Vary IFF. It will never reach their size and professionalism, especially due to the smallness of our country and the fact that the festival is organized by a production house that specialises in the organisation of the Miss Slovakia contest. This festival will be held from June 21-27, 2014.

III. The most extensive

Febiofest is one of the largest film festivals. For 21 years, its Slovak part has been organized by a hyperactive organisation: the Association of Slovak Film Clubs. The great founding father would be the Czech Febio Fest and the documentary filmmaker Fero Fenič⁴, since the Slovak version was an "echo" of the primarily Czech Febiofest programme. Nowadays, those are two separate events, which share a common brand of quality and tradition. Apart from the richest part in Bratislava, Febiofest takes place in other 8 towns in Slovakia. Its extent is of course due to the status of the organiser, which, as a distributor of art-house films has a network of cinemas which host the festival.⁵ In 2013, a Visegrad Competition of short films was part of the programme for the first time.⁶ The festival took place from March 21 to April 17, 2014.

IV. The most decaying

In 1999, the International Film Festival Bratislava was founded as a successor of International Film Festival Forum, with a similar main programme – a competition for first and second feature films and the same programme director.⁷ Naturally, bigger towns have a stronger potential audience and a greater number of well equipped cinemas (in this case it was mainly a multiplex in Bratislava). For a long time, IFF Bratislava was the most visited film event in Slovakia.⁸ The change occurred in 2011, when the programme director Matthieu Darras left the festival and the highest attendance was taken over by ArtFilmFest. The level of IFF Bratislava started to decrease significantly and it is still decreasing to this day.⁹ The decline in level is visible in the programme, locations, attendance and PR. This year will possibly be a turning point for this very festival, that will take place in November 2014.

V. The most documentaries

In 2006, Cinematik¹⁰ festival was founded in the most famous Slovak spa town Piešťany. Since 2010, it has been oriented strongly around documentaries.¹¹ And this same orientation usefully covers a huge gap in the market of Slovak film festivals – the absence of a festival focused on documentaries.¹² The attendance rate is stable, between 15,000 – 17,000 visitors.

Cinematik together with ArtFilmFest clearly confirm that the combination of a spa town and film works well with the Slovak festival audience.

VI. The most sophisticated

In 1999, the students and pedagogues of the Department of Film Criticism of the Academy of Performing Arts (VŠMU) founded a film seminar – 4 Elements¹³ – in Banská Štiavnica. The word seminar predetermines a certain distinctness from other Slovak festivals. A Central European spectator can find similarities to the Summer Film School Uherské Hradiště.¹⁴ For a long time, 4 Elements has cultivated Slovak cinephiles through a specific perspective of cinema in the context of a chosen topic¹⁵, various unorthodox places of screenings¹⁶, tutors' introductions to films and numerous discussions. It represents a combination of important cinematographic works with films out of Slovak distribution. Slovak cinephiles can't imagine a better place to develop their knowledge of film than the fabulous environment of Banská Štiavnica. The seminar will take place in August 2014.

VII. The most original

If 4 Elements is a unique film seminar, Kinobus¹⁷ is a film festival and school trip in one. Since 2005, a civil association Truc sphérique has organised bus trips around Slovakia, followed by screenings in chosen countryside cinemas, for a hundred accredited participants. The cinemas located throughout Slovakia are the remnants of cinefication of the 20th century's 50s-80s and are a specificity of post-socialist countries¹⁸. Project Kinobus not only revives but reconstructs the projection technique. The programme in the cinema is open not only to accredited participants but to local audiences as well. For the latter, the event of going to cinema is thus revived. "We are trying to emphasize the spatial aspect in the physical sense: cinemas as relics of a specific aestheticism and architecture, film experience coupled with the experiences of the trip, tourism based on discovering the ordinary. The meeting of locals and guest audiences creates an important frame of the cinema as an event."¹⁹ If we imagined Kinobus in an enormous dimension, we could compare it to the project Operation Kino: Sofia film festival on the road, from Bulgaria. But this enormous dimension will probably never be reached, mainly to the lack of state support. This year, Kinobus will travel around local cinemas in September.

VIII. The youngest

International Film Festival Early Melons (2008)²⁰ and Visegrad Film Forum (2011)²¹ are among the film events dedicated to the young, mostly students. Both events take place in Bratislava.²² Both are organised by two very young and enthusiastic teams. Early Melons Festival represents primarily student films and short film, in particular via an international competition of student films. The programme contains master classes and a scriptwriting workshop miniMIDPOINT. Visegrad Film Forum is focused mainly on networking and establishment of an international educational platform that would bring students, film professionals and film fans together. In the frame of Central Europe it is a unique event. Early Melons will take place in March 2015. Visegrad Film Forum took place in March 11-15, 2014.²³

IX. The most animated²⁴

The International Animation Festival Fest Anča²⁵ was founded in 2008 on the initiative of young animators in the most progressive Slovak cultural centre Station Žilina – Záríečie in Central Slovakia. Short films are in 4 international competitions, one of them dedicated to Slovak animation.²⁶ Since its establishment, the festival has been strongly profiled as multimedia and goes beyond the limits of animation film. It brings inspiration from other media, especially visual art, VJ-ing, computer games, puppet theatre, internet applications, mapping and new technologies. There are no red carpets, but during Fest Anča, one huge atmospheric animated bubble exists in Žilina. The spectator somehow feels like Anča in wonderland.²⁷ This year, Fest Anča will take place from June 18-22, 2014.

Of course, this enumeration is not a complete list of all Slovak festivals. There are several local screenings, competitions and festivals specialised by topic. We chose those that we personally think would be interesting for you, KINEČKO readers from abroad, in an international context. If you considered visiting some of them, our top choice would be 4 Elements, Kinobus, Visegrad Film Forum and of course Fest Anča.

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- 1 The foundation of Audiovisual fund in 2010 was a strong shot for the development of the audiovisual sector. It supports film festivals every year, the subsidies representing 10% of the overall budget of the fund (in 2014 it was an amount of EUR 500,000).
- 2 Year of the Establishment of the Slovak Republic.
- 3 Last year, 149 programmed films were screened. The Art Film Fest main prize – the Blue Angel for Best Film, was awarded to a Kazakh film *Harmony Lessons* (dir. by Emir Bajgazin). The Blue Angel for Best Director went to Nana Jekvtimišvili and Simon Gross for the film *In bloom*. Lika Babluani, the main actress of this film was awarded a Blue Angel for Best Female Performance. The Blue Angel for Best Male Performance went to Ercan Kesal for the film *Mold*. The Blue Angel Award for best short film under 30 minutes went to a Mexican animation *Reality 2.0* by Victor Orozc Ramirez.
- 4 In 1991, the writer, director and pedagogue of Slovak origins, Fero Fenič founded Febio – film and television production company supporting documentary works. In 1993 he founded a festival of independent film, television and video – Febiofest, later renamed as International Film Festival Prague Febiofest.
- 5 In 2013, the festival screened 129 films and was visited by approximately 9,400 spectators.
- 6 The award for the Best Short Film was awarded to a Hungarian feature film *My Guide* by Barnabás Tóth.
- 7 Peter Nágel is currently the programme director of ArtFilmFest.
- 8 In 2000-2010 the attendance rate varied between 20,000-50,000 visitors.
- 9 In 2013, 125 films were screened, with a total of 104 screenings and 8,200 spectators.
- 10 In 2013, 154 films were screened in 14 sections. The Meeting Point Europe Award went to *The Hunt* by Thomas Vinterberg. In the documentary section, the Cinematik.doc Award went to the film *Normalization* by Robert Kirchhoff.
- 11 With a competition of Slovak documentaries Cinematik.doc and an international professional workshop Coproduction of Documentary Films in Europe.
- 12 There are festivals in Slovakia which screen films focused on ecology (Ekotopfilm) and human rights (One World). Not that initiatives to found one wouldn't exist. Doc.sk Festival in Košice, which took place in 2010-2012, is particularly worth mentioning.
- 13 In 2013, a total of 54 films were screened in 41 projections with a total number of spectators above 4,900.
- 14 You can read more about it in Maroš Broj's article *Summer Film School Uherské Hradiště or Why visit our Czech neighbours?* in this issue of Kinečko.
- 15 The 2014 topic is the Power. In the past the themes were such as Love, Memory, Game, Mirror, Night, Body, Revolution.
- 16 The screenings take place in a castle, a botanical garden, old factories and the railway station.
- 17 In 2013, 21 films were screened in 14 projections with a total number of spectators above 1,300.
- 18 After the fall of socialism, there were more than 700 cinemas in Slovakia. They were also built on a large scale in the countryside as tools of state propaganda. Nowadays, 154 of them are still working. The others are run down and neglected.
- 19 Ivana Rumanová in the article Kinobus 2013: Film swimming, published in *KINEČKO in shorts* magazine.
- 20 In 2013, 77 films in 7 sections in 22 screenings were shown, 353 spectators visited the festival.
- 21 In 2004, 9 master classes, 3 case studies, 4 discussions took place and 8 collections from 8 film schools were screened.
- 22 There is also a Festival of Student Films Áčko, organised by FTF VŠMU in Bratislava.
- 23 Should these two film events join together, it would create a unique and fresh film festival, which Bratislava deserves.
- 24 At this moment I have to admit that I have a very strong personal interest in the organisation of Fest Anča. I have been the director of the festival since 2012, which, of course, deprives me of distance and objectivity, but on the other hand, enriches my knowledge of the system Slovak film festivals operate in.
- 25 In 2013 at Fest Anča, there was a total number of 279 screenings within 42 projections. The total number of visitors was over 6,000.
- 26 In 2013, Anča Award went to the Slovak film *Pandas* (d. Matúš Vizár), Anča Student Award to a Swiss film *Plug & Play* (d. Michal Frei), Anča Music Video Award went to a French video-clip *Bye Bye Macadam* (d. Dimitri Stankowicz) and Anča Kids Film Award went to a British film *Damned* (d. Richarda Phelana). In 2014 the competition section expanded – Slovak animation films can now win the Anča Slovak Award.
- 27 Quoting the editor in chief of KINEČKO Eva Krížková and her report from Fest Anča 2013.

Slovak cinema and the world

A. M. Brousil and Richard Blech with significant French director René Clair at the Venice IFF

Each era has its favourites, interpreters and prophets. It is no different in cinema. A walk through the history of cinema shows how the favourites and tastes varied, how some works were praised over the others depending on time, how facts and criteria varied according to taste and orientation, but also according to factual knowledge, that is, in the case of the history of film, often extremely complex and not transparent enough. When Georges Sadoul wrote his General History of Cinema, he often used only second-hand information, because he had not seen many of the films he included in the first edition of the History. He had only mediated information from newspapers or other writers at his disposal. Only later, after having seen these films, did he clarify and change his assessments in the following editions of *The History*, which remained the only source of knowledge of the world of cinema for many years. Since then, a lot of water has passed under the bridge, and the history of cinema knows other authors who were able to work with more sophisticated knowledge. When a Polish historian Jerzy Toeplitz was writing his *History of Cinema*, he had travelled around the world to get to know various cinematographies “at first hand”. He studied and gave lectures about cinema in the USA, he taught at a film school in Australia, and therefore his *History of Cinema*, based on his own knowledge, could capture the ups and downs of the development of cinema in the world very objectively. Yet neither Sadoul, nor Toeplitz succumbed to the “Award-winning criteria” and the rankings of financial benefits of individual films. That’s why their approach of not succumbing to these temptations is an example for all the future generations of film historians.

If we ask ourselves today what Slovak cinema is known to the world, we must look at how the current historians, who often present themselves as heralds of cults, assessors and prophets, know it. The truth is, that the current world of cinema is more fragmented, richer and more opaque, than in the times of Sadoul or Toeplitz. It is more widespread, it doesn’t only include European and American cinema, but also many cinematographies from Africa and Asia, which often dominate international film festivals and push cinema towards new paths. Today’s technology means make it possible for everybody who has the will and ambition to shoot films. Often these low-budget films determine the development path of a given cinema. The quantity and “popularity” bring a certain level of opacity and an inability to define what is new and stimulating and separate it from gleanings, where just the fact that “it’s moving” is satisfactory. And one more thing. In the past, it was rare to see a woman in the film profession (director or a DOP). Those were specifically male professions. Today these professions are teeming with women who bring a different view of the world from men. This change had a great impact on Slovak cinema, where activity has increased lately. If we accepted the opinion of Czech ex-president Václav Klaus, that film is “like any other merchandise”, there would be nothing to talk about. But if we recognize that film is primarily a cultural

phenomenon which reflects cultural spiritual movements of society the same way as literature, theatre, music or visual arts, we cannot focus only on “how much will it earn”. Like any other, Slovak cinema enters the cognitive and comparative contexts of other cinematographies and other works, mainly in historiographical publications.

The recently published Czech edition of the work *Film History: An Introduction*, by American film historians Kristin Thompson and David Bordwell, who have studied the development of world cinematographies for over thirty years, still resonates in the minds of the film community. Slovak cinema and filmmakers are mentioned in this comprehensive work only marginally, without any indications of assessment. An Irish filmmaker and historian Mark Cousins had an interesting approach to the history of cinema. With his digital camera he shot a series “The Story of Film”. Even though it shows a very personal approach to the subject we will assume a certain level of knowledge.

When asked what he knows and appreciates in Slovak cinema, he answered: “I like Uher, Hanák, and the third one... I don’t remember.” Who was “the third one”? Solan? Holý? Barabáš? Grečner? Jakubisko? Havetta? Dušan Trančík? Or Martin Šulík, who represents a significant connection between two generations of Slovak filmmakers?

How can the world know about Slovak cinema and filmmakers, when the two cult works, which are the source of information especially for the younger generation, show so much superficial ignorance? Where is the obstacle to knowledge? Within the language barrier? In insufficient contacts to the world with which our film works, or in our insufficient ability to “sell” our films? The tradition of European cinematographies is characterized by bipolarity: film as a merchandise and film as a work of art with the ambition to face other forms of art. Each of these aspects prevailed alternatively.

Sometimes the author himself embraced his artistic ambitions, or it was a whole group of filmmakers that seized the favourable social moment.

For Italian neorealism, those were the post-war years of hope; for Czech and Slovak film, the last century’s sixties.

If we ask ourselves whether the world knew Czech and Slovak films better or if we knew the film world, the answer is pretty obvious. Even in the most favourable times we didn’t build a well thought out system that would get Slovak and Czech films abroad. If it so happened, they appeared only at film festivals and various one-time screenings, but didn’t make it to a wider cinema distribution. The funding didn’t exist and the system counted on certain automatisms which didn’t prove functional. That’s why the Americans discovered the films of Czech and Slovak New Wave from the last century’s sixties only recently. Even at festivals, mostly universally understandable Puppet Films of Jiří Trnka a Hermína Týlová or films combining live-action footage with animation by Karel Zeman would prevail. Those were produced in the Czech Republic. There were no such “export

films in Slovakia and that’s why the only success of a Czechoslovakian film, by Czech director Martin Frič *Jánošík*, starring Paľo Bielik, resonated in Latin America, where it was reckoned the “Slovak Robin Hood”.

The role of Filmexport, part of *Czechoslovak State Film (Československý štátny film)*, was to promote and sell Czech and Slovak films abroad. But it was just a mechanical bureaucracy that didn’t really help our films succeed abroad. The Rector of the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague, A. M. Brousil, held the most important role in the reciprocal relationships for many years. He was the President of the Jury at the Karlovy Vary IFF for several years. He was called the Ambassador of Czechoslovak film and he fulfilled his duty devotedly for many years and without being ever officially entrusted with the mission. He had a special gift, and thanks to the several languages that he mastered perfectly, he built up contacts in Italy, South America, but also other European cinematographies, including Russian. Through his rich contacts with the world of film, he obtained copies of foreign films and screened them to his pupils. That’s how the students of Prague FAMU could sometimes see the newest American film even before its premiere in New York, or an Italian film sooner than the Italian audience. I mention this because these films, borrowed for five-six days always went to Bratislava for a day or two. There, at night, the father of Peter Dubecký, the current director of the Slovak Film Institute, screened the films for a closed circle of journalists and filmmakers. Brousil did a lot for Slovak film in the world as well. When abroad or in conferences at film festivals in Karlovy Vary, he would always emphasise the autonomy of Slovak cinema, and helped Slovak films go out to the world. For me personally, he mediated contacts with many important figures of Italian, French, but also Polish and Russian film. It was thanks to him that the horizons of the world of film opened up for my generation. Brousil deserves an award in memoriam for all that he has done for Czech and Slovak film. I witnessed and participated in his personal encounters with many world film personalities at film festivals in Venice, Bergamo and Karlovy Vary of course. If Macek and Pašteková in their *History of Slovak cinema (Dejiny slovenskej kinematografie)* write about my worldly wisdom, it was A. M. Brousil who mediated this wisdom for me. Thanks to him, I grew to know and like Italian film, through him I grew to know the whole spectre of post-war Italian cinema, I met French, Soviet and Polish filmmakers. This was the way to emphasise among these contacts that Czechoslovak cinema contains an autonomous national cinema. Some international film festivals “cheered” Slovak films. For example the *International Art Film Festival, Bergamo* in northern Italy and its President Nino Zuchelli. The indefatigable A. M. Brousil was building ways for all the Czech and Slovak films that were accepted and awarded at international film festivals abroad. In times when travelling the world was not a matter of course, one way existed to get to international film festivals abroad. In 1930,

Belgian journalists founded the International Federation of Film Critics, FIPRESCI, and after World War II the number of members grew to several dozens. The delegated representatives awarded the FIPRESCI prize at international film festivals. The prize was usually awarded to a film that was considered to have made the greatest contribution to the festival but that didn’t receive any award for some reason. Here was the possibility to go to the world even at times when the borders between East and West were surrounded by barbed wire, the possibility to know foreign films and at the same time to promote our national production that was a great unknown for most of the members of juries.

What is the reciprocity of this knowledge? Did we know the world better or did the world know us better? The penetration of Slovak films to the world was irregular and that’s what the knowledge of the topic looked like. After television and the first production of TV films in Slovakia developed, the best TV films found a way to International Television Festivals and some of them were highly awarded (*Balada o siedmich obesených* and others). Even the division of the world into two political and power hemispheres didn’t stop some important films of American, British, French, Italian or Swedish production from getting to our cinema distribution. Regarding works from Asia, those were mostly films from Japan, where cinema was at its peak of creativity in the mid-20th century. Films representing these and various other cinematographies were to be seen not only at Karlovy Vary IFF but also at various mass screenings (film festivals in amphitheatres) or in specialised art-house cinemas.

The last twenty years represent a new chapter in mutual cognition. Films are no longer being made in one monopoly organisation. They are made based on initiatives of individuals (groups). Everybody who has ambitions, quite accessible technology and the ability to get necessary financial funds can make it not only at home but abroad as well. The monopoly of film production has been cancelled and the doors are open to those with ambition.

RICHARD BLECH

Film critic, historian, publicist and encyclopedist. Author of the books *A Panorama of World Cinema* (1964), *The World of Film Directors* (1968) and *The Little Encyclopedia of Film* (1974) among others.

Director Vojtěch Jasný and A. M. Brousil at the Venetian Lido



Eternal sunshine of the critic's mind

And isn't that why we are doing this?

The idea for this collaborative article stems from a conversation me and Eva Krizkova had at the last Berlinale, when I was telling her about writing for a certain outlet which is dedicated to promotion of films of a certain geographic origin, and thus does not publish negative reviews. Basically, if a film is not very good but isn't totally terrible either, the outlet in question points out the good sides of a film and skips the really bad aspects. Also, from the day-to-day work aspect, in Berlin a critic does not have much time to decide, as various publications run at up to five new reviews every day, so the critic has to make the decision if he or she is going to cover a film based on its distribution prospects rather than its quality.

And so here we have four stories by four film critics about their festival experience. One of them is very established, while the three others are young, eager and aspiring. We believe the readers, who are most probably experienced festival-goers or at least well-versed in film critique, will easily recognize who is who, and will have the chance to find out who are the new talents in the field to watch in the future.

VLADAN PETKOVIC

Serbian correspondent for Screen International and Cineuropa. Eternal film critic friend of Kinečko.

Juggling film critic

A freelancing film critic, otherwise also known as the “juggling writer”, faces a rather demanding, yet ambitious challenge whenever he/she writes for more than one media outlet at a film festival. The frustration starts when the self-content critic sends out pitches here and there, thus entering the highly aggravating waiting period during which the editor should – or should not – reply to his/her pitches, without however indulging immediately in sending mass e-mails all at once. What then ensues may be deemed as equally harsh (and no offence to the editors): whoever responds first, gets the story. And, take it from me, it is so terrible to wait several interminable days for a rejection and then to pitch to someone else and resume the wait all over again. When the pitching nightmare is over and indeed positively results in writing for various media, the frustration continues with the prioritizing of the media in question and involves, of course, multiple deadlines, a situation that puts the critic to many tests on a daily basis over the course of the festival. Also, logically enough, each medium should be tackled in a different way and auto-plagiarism is obviously not an option. In my humble opinion and experience, the film critic who chooses to be a juggling writer should be very talented, versatile, adaptable and ready to meet all sorts of different and diverse requirements, needs and tasks his various editors in chief expect of her/him. In that sense, and unfortunately, the downside of this ambitious undertaking is that because one is so concentrated on his/her endless tasks, one might lose out on many films and not even get a realistic idea of the festival, especially a big one like for instance the Berlin International Film Festival. This regularly happens to young aspiring film critics at early stages of their career in an attempt to assert themselves in this somewhat harsh environment. So, being aware of this should definitely help them. I also found that, usually, sleep and food deprivation as well as preposterous amounts of caffeine and discipline do the trick. But, on a more serious note, freelancing for multiple outlets is a very stressful and disheartening endeavour but also an immensely stimulating, enriching and fruitful experience that gives

one a valuable and unique opportunity to test one's skills, limits and affinities and opens new horizons and interests as well as the possibility to work with more than one editor, who, in the end, are our most valued allies. After all, we do what we love most: write about Film.

TARA KARAJICA

Freelance film critic who contributes with film reviews and festival reports to Tess Magazine, Festivalists, Indiewire, Screen International among many other media outlets including her own blog, The Film Prospector and FRED fm. Editor in chief of CINEmagazin, the only film magazine in Serbia, and a member of Criticwire and the International Cinephile Society

Sandpit spats: when and when not to tear a film a new one

At Northeast England's biennial AV Festival in March 2012, I met a filmmaker whose documentary I had just reviewed. I'd given the film three stars out of five, and wrote what to my mind still reads as a fairly balanced critique, highlighting positives before addressing some of the problems I had with it. A jovial evening ensued in the company of colleagues and said filmmaker.

Later that night, my review was brought up, as if it had until that point been an elephant in the room. The filmmaker's qualm—voiced civilly enough, by the way—was that producers wouldn't even read my review, and that those three stars were all that mattered. The rating I'd given *this* film could potentially dent the filmmaker's chances of securing funding for the *next* one. My reply, half-joking: “Then you should have made a better film!”

I don't even like stars. Not because I think they're meaningless, but because I think the opposite: they *have* meaning, only the meaning's slippery. It's a more interpretable meaning than the opinionship and analysis expressed in the article proper. Whereas for me a three-star grade is the right side of positive, for others anything less than full marks might denote an odious, hot stink.

Some critics—too many, in fact—have submitted to the moneymen: a film is now either a five-star masterpiece or a one-star disaster. These same critics are also too eager to assume their mantle as tastemakers, whereby a person's artistic career is in their hands—and their own career is seemingly dependent upon being quoted in the trailer for next summer's blockbuster.

Often, such behaviour reeks of under-the-rock, keyboard-warrior fandom, where a critic's enthusiasm for one film acts as a kind of tent-pole under which more routine stuff brews: hatchet jobs, character assassinations, dismissive snark and hyperbolic, polysyllabic, ad hominem, smart-alecky drivel. Some universal advice always applicable to the sandpit: if you haven't got anything nice to say, don't say it. Right?

Yes and no. As enjoyable as tearing into a new film can be, vitriol is a wasted emotion—not only because of its capacity to hurt others, but because it brings the aggressor down too. I know plenty of people for whom the glass is always half-empty, but I stay clear of those for whom the drink inside the glass is piss. When did we begin to think bitterness was a human prerogative?

Taking a film's failures personally: I've been there. But I'm not the centre of this world, and artistic weaknesses are often conditioned by wider pressures. Criticism is surely healthier when it approaches films as products of social and historical forces. A film is sometimes shit in spite of good intentions. And, the reverse is

also true: strengths are often accidental, or a result of a subject matter that compels an otherwise weak filmmaker down an atypical path.

Perhaps in the purportedly more adult sandpit of film criticism, then, the advisory placard should read: don't write anything about a film that you wouldn't say to its makers in person. I, for instance, look forward to the day I get to tell Bruce Willis that *Die Hard* is one of the best films I've ever seen, and that *A Good Day to Die Hard* is down there with the very worst.

MICHAEL PATTISON

sight & Sound and Fandor correspondent

In dreams begin responsibilities

“They say *time* is the *fire* in which we *burn!*” rasps Malcolm McDowell's nefarious Soran in *Star Trek: Generations*, the 24th-century El-Aurian scientist somewhat incongruously quoting the 1938 Delmore Schwarz poem *Calmly We Walk Through This April's Day* (from the collection which provides this text with its title).

Soran's motivation in this, the most underrated and most discombobulatingly Tarkovskian of *Trek* pictures, is returning to the ‘Nexus’, a trans-dimensional realm formed entirely and infinitely by one's desires. “Time has no meaning there—the predator has no teeth” he remarks of a paradisaical mini-cosmos whose powers exceed even *Stalker's* Room and *Solaris's* eponymous planet.

In 2001, aged 30, I belatedly obtained access to my own personal version of the Nexus—by somewhat less drastic means than the apocalyptically solipsistic Soran's star-zapping, planet-annihilating approach. In Manchester, I boarded a FinnAir jet to Helsinki—and a short hop took me to Tallinn: the Estonian capital where Tarkovsky shot *Stalker*, and since 1997 host-city of *Pimedate Ööde* (Black Nights) Film Festival.

I'd been to some fair-sized UK festivals but this somehow seemed like a new level of concentrated cinephilia: five/six films a day, for a week; the chance to hear, perhaps even hang out (= drink) with film-makers, critics and programmers, and experience an exotic city far from home.

I was hooked. Ball: rolling; die: cast. From then on I went to at least three foreign festivals a year; by 2009 I was up to a dozen. By 2011—I quit my horse-racing job that January—the tally had reached an unsustainable 16. I've now been to well over a hundred—home/overseas—including 15 jury-services. And I'd like to think that by now I can, as with films, discern good from bad, identify whatever greys exist between extremes and defend my stance in person and print. But it isn't simply a case that the longer one spends on the circuit, the sharper one's judgement becomes. Obstacles to overview are a constant hazard; objectivity is easily occluded.

Take the matter of independence. It's no secret that many journalists are ‘paid’ to attend certain festivals by organisers—not in terms of Euro-bulging envelopes, rather the provision of *gratis* hotel-rooms (b&b, unless the festival is Dutch!), maybe flights. And it'd be disingenuous to claim that accepting such generosity is free of risk—even peril—and that no journalist has ever devoted herself to milking the cow for all it's worth.

I once breakfasted with a smart young critic visibly revelling in the opulent hospitality of a wealthy festival who'd flown him in (business-class). It was his debut there, and he was very keen to be invited back. How “honest”

should he be in his dispatches, he asked? I told him to be as frank as possible—and bugger the consequences.

Just as, when reviewing films, a critic should call it as he sees it, likewise any festival report *should* be motivated by honesty, fairness, objectivity (though it never does any harm to take soundings from colleagues and interpolate same into one's encomium/diatribe). Otherwise the writer can one day wake up halfway down a nastily slippery slope...

Then there's the nagging, guilty sensation, very common—inescapable?—at the larger festivals—that you somehow *haven't seen the right films*. This is often a problem at events like Rotterdam, where even if a critic saw six features a day for ten days she'd still have sampled less than a third of the catalogue. Enough to gain a *feel* of whether this is a “good year” or a “bad year”, but insufficient to deliver a conclusive verdict. Try, however, we must.

Meanwhile the last temptation, as a bloke from St Louis wrote, remains the greatest treason: to do the right deed for the wrong reason. Just as it's easy to get carried away sticking the boot into some hapless, useless waste of “celluloid”, puffing oneself up into a righteous fury amid noxious clouds of vitriol, there's likewise the risk of losing control when jeremiading away against a deeply disappointing film-festival.

The big ones in particular make for extraordinarily easy targets, and it's very difficult to express anger in a way that's sufficiently different from complaints that have been directed against the same organisations for years/decades (there's always the danger of being labelled an attention-seeking “contrarian”).

This stuff can become as dull for the reader as it is for the writer—and there's also the lurking worry that, if one inveighs against decadent cinema-standards for too long, the cumulative effect will be to repel audiences altogether. Why *bother* traipsing in the rain to the local picturehouse for the latest “buzz” subtitled film, when there's *Borgen*, *True Detective* and/or *Les Revenants* on the telly? It's common to hear our century described as a golden age of serious-minded small-screen drama; but if any critic's been talking about current cinema in such a glowing way, they've not done so within *my* earshot. David Thomson, for one, never misses a chance to point out the downward spiral into which his preferred art-form has (in his view) become irrevocably locked.

Things were, of course, so much better in the olden days. Back then, let's say in 1964, there were a dozen film-festivals worthy of the name, and an assiduous critic could keep reasonably abreast of global film-culture past and present. The expansion of digital and the medium's fabled “democratisation” have hastened ongoing expansions in film-production, which post-2008 readjustments have only marginally dampened. And the ratio of lousy-to-worthy films never seems to budge an inch.

Trekking from festival to festival, sitting through (or walking out of) one time-wasting misfire after another, it's easy to lose heart. And the wild thrill of entering the ‘Nexus’ for the first, second, or sixth time will necessarily lose its energising ardour after the twentieth, fiftieth, seventieth visit to the altered state of advanced cinephilia which the film-festival world, for all its frustrations and flaws, still provides. For many of us, indeed, it's still the case that film festivals are “the fire in which we burn”. And if we're lucky, “the school in which we learn”.

NEIL YOUNG

Lives in Sunderland, Northeast England, and reviews films for The Hollywood Reporter.



Avoiding films at a film festival

If you're holding this magazine right now, then you are (or were) at Cannes, the biggest and most prestigious film festival in the world. I admit beforehand that what I'm about to say might not hold true for Cannes, with its mouth-watering competition line-up and jaw dropping Critics Week entries. Nevertheless, for many other festivals (and there's a lot of them), understanding one axiom is essential:

Seeing films at a festival is a waste of time.

A seasoned critic, someone who's been attending Cannes for nearly 40 years, said this to me. He explained that one could see films anywhere, using screeners or the internet. Coming to a festival for that, then, is not an optimum use of your time and money.

Ah, money. Attending a festival often lightens one's bank account, however slightly. The organizers may provide you with accommodation, but that may only cover three nights of a week-long festival. They may pay for your flights, but for such a boon you must be (a) a regular at the festival, (b) pals with the press office, and even then (c) lucky. Of course, your publication could pay for your travel. But, in this age of downsizing and cut-throat freelancing, that's an exotic dish few journalists get to taste. I am from India, and that means having to get a visa for almost any festival (unless Cambodia decides to organize a big one). Not only is this a tidy expense in itself, it eats up multiple working hours.

After you have haggled with the press office for a couple of extra nights of stay and found the cheapest flights, the pressure on making the most of the occasion is substantial. What, then, must a journalist do at a festival?

The same critic from above went on to tell me that networking, "exploiting acquaintances for the purpose of profit", might be the bane of a pure festival experience but increasingly important today. Rather than sit in a dark screening room for two hours testing an obscure local film, you could cover your bases by emailing the PR agents and obtaining a Vimeo link or screener. This would take maybe 30 minutes. Instead of working dutifully in the hopes that your writing two weeks later may catch the attention of festival directors scouring the internet, you could get your hands on the industry guest list, see which festivals near you have representatives, read up on their programming and arrange a meeting. Oh, and unless it's a globally important festival like Cannes or Venice, then chances are that the most unique thing about the event won't be its programming but its setting. Catching up on what's made the news in the region in the last few months will not only help extract more from the local films, but also aid you in making better conversation at the festival. Pitching yourself isn't easy when you're a generally clueless bore.

I'm aware of how cynical and materialistic the preceding paragraph reads. I also want to clarify that a film festival doesn't resemble the shady district where film noir plays out. There is a lot of sunshine and a lot of cheer if you can be pragmatic about it. For example, going for Masterclasses and panel discussions may not always yield you the chance to write incisive criticism, but they are enlightening events that aggrandize your knowledge bank and can lead to a report that helps pay the bills. I learnt more about cinema from listening to Asghar Farhadi discuss his writing process than I would have from watching two films in the same time. The story I got out of it was pure gravy.

Why is all of this worth it? Because there comes a time when you've networked all you could and arranged all the screeners your bag could fit. That's when you'll walk into the screening room, sit down and wait for the screen to light up as the room darkens. In that quiet moment, you'll experience a thrill and excitement that you're about to watch a work of art.

And isn't that why we are doing this?

LAYA MAHESHWARI

Film journalist based in Mumbai. His writing has appeared on Film Comment, RogerEbert.com, Indiewire, Filmmaker Magazine and several other publications. In a brash affront to stereotypes, he has never danced around trees despite being Indian.

What is the visibility of Eastern European film behind the Berlin Wall?

Distribution and circulation of films within Europe is a priority of the European audiovisual policy. But what is the way to make sure that films will be seen even outside their home country? The European Commission cannot force people from e.g. France to watch Slovak films. Not only is the export of films from Central and Eastern Europe towards the west not very smooth, actually, after the fall of Berlin Wall, it never even started. How can we keep cultural diversity in Europe and have an audience that will appreciate it?

But Europe has instruments that deal with this issue: since 2003, the new member states have joined the biggest audiovisual programme of the European Commission – Media, which was meant to help the integration of new countries and maintain cultural diversity in Europe. This ten-year programme ended last year and was substituted by the Creative Europe programme. The transition to a new period is a good occasion to take stock. That was the reason to organise in Warsaw last December the first audiovisual summit for professionals from the region. The initiative originated in Media Desk Poland, in cooperation with the Polish Film Institute and the association Film New Europe, which brings together regional film institutions and is the editor of a web magazine of the same name about the latest news from this part of Europe in English.

More than 100 agents of film institutions participated in the professional think-tank in Poland. They spent 3 days in Warsaw in panel discussions, thematic group work and exchange of best practices from the last years. Many professionals met here for the first time, and most importantly, with colleagues who share a post-communist cultural landscape, are operating in small markets with minor language groups. Unlike other international meetings, we were here among professionals in comparable situations. The summit focused on diagnosis of principal problems: lack of finances in the sector, a need for qualified training and participation in international networks, possibilities of amelioration of distribution of our films abroad etc. At the conclusion of the summit, the representatives of film institutions from the region stated the wish to have a greater say in European audiovisual policy and therefore will continue meeting together. Certainly it is important to get out of the position of the silent minority, because we can play an important role in Europe in forming cultural policy as experts and creative talents, and in the meantime, we still have a lot to learn from the rest of Europe. Our region needs to be well represented in Europe and even if we have made progress in recent years, we still have a lot of work to do.

When we look at France, which is considered a market where new talents emerge and the number of films in distribution is the highest, we realise that since the nineties, only a very few Slovak films have made it to distribution there (for example *Blind Loves*); the market share of all films from Central and Eastern Europe is smaller than one percent. Film professionals are not in sync with international film events, they aren't in close enough touch with professionals from other countries, our films are not in the selections of major festivals, and therefore they don't make main distribution abroad. With a few exceptions, of course, but these concern mainly Romanian films. If a film makes it to distribution, its success is not guaranteed. On the contrary, the results of distributors are often miserable, and therefore they no longer want another "unsuccessful" films from the east. One could say that, twenty years after the fall of Berlin Wall, there is still no dialogue between this cinephile power and our region. Countries of Eastern Europe are not well identified, and the image of our cinematographies and hence societies is more or less rigid. Our stars and films don't exist for the French.

A few years ago, the argument for digitalisation of cinemas was that films will circulate better on DCP, because the heavy 35 mm copies are costly and complicate diversity on big screens. However, the opposite is true. It turns out that even a small cinema can get blockbuster and mainstream films, so the interest and attendance concentrates around a few films and everything that is smaller, independent, or "different" is marginalised even more.

This category also includes films from the East. It is not true at all that "a good film always finds its way to the audience". The French market is full of blockbusters and mainstream

films. The arch-problem is the propagation of film, which is often underestimated by the authors.

The good news is that in recent years, the situation of film funds in new member states has stabilised, and there is a new generation of film agents who don't intend to leave things to chance. In March, at Visegrad film forum, the representatives of film funds of four countries (The Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia) met again in order to proceed with discussions on better cooperation in coproduction, distribution and propagation of films in the region.

Festivals play an important role in the propagation of cinema of the region. There are several festivals in Europe that realise the importance of enhancing the visibility of diversity and talents of Central and Eastern Europe, and systematically focus on those.

Among the oldest is the Italian Trieste Film Festival (25 years), German Cottbus Film Festival (24 years) and goEast (14 years), French A l'Est Du Nouveau (9 years), Luxembourg CinEast (5 years) and Austrian Let'CEE (2 years).

The French festival A l'Est du Nouveau, which I know the best because I've been a member of its team for several years, was founded in 2002 by Věra Chytilová's student David Doponchel. It is the only festival with a competition in France where 100% of its programme is from Eastern Europe. In addition to the competition selection, which presents new films and new faces with an emphasis on originality of topics and film language, a French spectator can also see a retrospective, a short films section, a section for children, a themed section and other special screenings. That's how every year, several films that are not in the French distribution make it to the country, where a distributor can notice them. A filmmaker has the possibility of meeting a French audience as well as film agents. The town of Rouen, where the festival takes place, was given the nickname "Capital of Eastern European Cinematographies in France". The festival's ambition in its 10th edition is to compile the theme of the situation of films from Eastern European countries in the West 25 years after the fall of the Berlin Wall and open professional panels on the reasons why Eastern European films don't make it to the French spectator. An interesting fact is, that for 5 years now, the festival has had a Latin-American version, Al Este de Lima, in Peru. Both festivals have a very similar programme. Last year, this festival, together with the festival Europe autour d'Europe and a distribution company Clavis Film, founded a new film club in Paris, Kino Visegrad, which focuses on club screenings of films from this particular region.

The organisation of film promotion abroad requires the experience of film centres, but mainly finances. It is expected that professionalisation of Eastern European film industries will continue. Authors who have lived through changes in society come into play; they can talk about them through films. This experience and the Eastern European aesthetic can raise a wave of interest in Western Europe, a quarter century after the fall of the Berlin Wall. The publication of the programme of San Sebastian indicates this possibility. The festival will present around fifty films from this region from the last 25 years.

MARKÉTA HODOUŠKOVÁ

Freelance consultant and project manager in different cultural organizations in Europe, presently in charge of the accompanying event of the French festival of films from Central and Eastern Europe "A l'Est du Nouveau", (its Latin-American version in Peru "Al Este de Lima"). She also works for the international NGO "Film New Europe Association".

FIVE YEARS OF MIDPOINT - CENTRAL EUROPEAN SCRIPT CENTER

MIDPOINT – Central European Script Center has offered filmmakers several types of programmes focused on dramaturgy and script development for five years already. Apart from student workshops, aimed at students and recent scriptwriting, direction and production graduates, the Center offers workshops for Czech and Slovak professionals, master classes and systematic assistance to novice filmmakers.

Barbora Struss, Managing Director, Helena Zajíčková, Programme Coordinator, and Mary Kate O'Flanagan, tutor of the programme Training the Trainers, told us about the successful work of the center and its various programmes.

PG: What was the motivation to found MIDPOINT – Central European Script Center?

BS: Lack of dramaturgy in graduation projects. The authors usually devote all their energy to the development of the film. They write a script and most of the time, they have neither energy nor money left to take care of dramaturgy. Their mind is set on shooting the film, so they put little emphasis on the development of the script. Moreover, we felt that students who wanted to work in creative production should have greater knowledge of dramaturgy, in order to become more erudite partners of scriptwriters and directors.

HZ: At the same time we wanted something that would take them out of their own school,

into an international environment, because in the beginning we felt that the majority of students make their films just for school – in the second or third year they get a task, and very few students can imagine it being a film for an audience, one that would be screened in places other than school. Therefore we thought that it would be ideal to put students of various film schools together and that the whole process of talking about their projects could be done in an international environment.

PG: How did the partner schools (FAMU Prague, VŠMU Bratislava, PWSFTviT Łódź, UNATC Bucharest, SZFE Budapest, and dffb Berlin) take to the idea? Didn't they defend themselves?

BS: We were expecting great scepticism, but I must say that until now I have been very positively surprised, because every participating school acceded to the idea in a very active and positive way, both at the level of pedagogues or students.

PG: How has MIDPOINT evolved within its five years of existence and what will the next steps for the future be?

HZ: We started only with development of scripts and treatments. It was equally important to us to help concrete projects as well as provide students and graduates with the further possibility of training. At the beginning, the participants might have applied out of curiosity. Now they apply with projects that have secured funding, or they get this after they move on from MIDPOINT. In some cases they even get co-producers. Thanks to that, students are more focused, and throughout the workshop they want to work intensely and get a great deal done on the script. They realise themselves how important it is to spend the week they have in the most effective way possible. And as well as some projects being realised, the fact that some authors apply several times in a row is a great satisfaction for us. Later we began with the programme Training the Trainers. In the first year, we had several applications from within the former student MIDPOINT participants, nowadays doctoral students at partner schools, who started teaching themselves. Within this programme they study methodology of approach to dramaturgy, applying this approach at schools and making it permanent. But we also felt that we don't want to lose

contact with concrete projects that participated at student MIDPOINT, and that there were many things in postproduction worth analysing, which led to the idea of a new workshop – Dramaturgy in the editing room. Last year it was held for the first time and it was very successful. Participants presented their rough-cut material and they got feedback not only from tutors but from other participants too, which was one of the things that was evaluated most positively. At schools at this stage, one is shut in alone in the editing room. We offered the possibility of screening the cut to an audience, and time to re-edit and test how it works. Except for production, which we can't really take part in, MIDPOINT covers all the areas where dramaturgy is important – script preparation and editing.

BS: So far we have focused on feature film and short film, this year we opened up a possibility to apply with an animation film as well. From 2015 on we would like to offer a special workshop for four to six projects of television series from Central and Eastern Europe, which could be attended not only by scriptwriters but developers from television as well.

PG: If you look back, what do you consider the biggest success of MIDPOINT?

BS: The fact that we work on the development phase implies that we wait for years before the first version of script or treatment transforms into a film, therefore we are seeing the first fruits of our work with feature films only now. It is important for us that awareness about MIDPOINT is rising, and that our target group in the region knows about us.

HZ: It is also wonderful to see how MIDPOINT participants broaden their horizons; they learn to think about projects in a complex way – they know possibilities and options where to turn with their next project, but also that they have to include the audience... It is very satisfying for us.

PG: Mary Kate, you work for MIDPOINT as a script consultant and trainer in dramaturgy. Why do you find its programmes useful?

MK: Any chance to accelerate learning is valuable. Filmmakers without access to training have to teach themselves by trial and error, which is a slow and costly way to learn. The Midpoint programmes do three things. First, they teach the participants how to learn from observing films that connect with an audience

– not copying but observing the principles at work. Second, they use works-in-progress to apply what the participants are learning in a practical way. People participate very well when they can see that their own projects are getting nearer to being production-ready by going through this process. Lastly, they introduce people to other filmmakers from around Europe and teach collaborative skills, creating relationships that are going to span careers.

PG: What about the Training the Trainers programme?

MK: Many people find themselves in a position of teaching because they have been good students and it's a way for artists to have a reliable income stream. However, teaching writing to writers is an art in itself. Teachers who aren't sure what they're doing or who give harsh critiques can confuse or discourage a writer. Teachers who have practical tools to convey and have the skills to deal with writers of all temperaments can raise the ability of students rapidly. Our programme gives an introduction to the approach we use, which has a solid intellectual framework to address work in progress.

PG: Could you describe any issues participants are mostly dealing with?

MK: Lack of self-belief. By giving them tools we can moderate that feel of being overwhelmed and show them there is always a way to organise your thinking and your approach.

PG: It might be thankless to teach – in terms of the fruit of your work... To teach the teacher sounds like the most thankless job, especially in the world of art. Why did you accept an offer to become a tutor of the Training the Trainers?

MK: Teaching screenwriting in this way is the most rewarding work. I love my work. I could talk about writing movies all day every day. We teach people who are passionately interested in this subject. The material we have to share is uniquely helpful. Our teaching is received everywhere in the world with enthusiasm and even jubilant excitement. After every workshop people tell us it has been a life-changing week, or fortnight or year.

PETER GAŠPARIK

Summer Film School Uherské Hradiště

or Why visit our Czech neighbours?

Summer Film School (SFS) is one of the most interesting, not quite typical summer events in our region for all enthusiasts of good films. For the author of this article, it was the first film event he discovered as a teenager. Since that fatal visit he hasn't missed a single year, but for the last one, something that he still regrets. This also confirms numerous qualities of the SFS Uherské Hradiště.

What was originally a closed event for members of film clubs in Czechoslovakia, grew during its many years of existence into a film event that no amateur of cinema should omit in the summer. The Summer Film School will celebrate its 40th edition, and similarly to past years, this edition will definitely not disappoint.

Whereas in the Slovak environment, there is no shortage of festivals in the summer, a film event that would openly refuse a competition section and almost exclusively focus on current film but would systematically present archive films from all eras and countries still doesn't exist. On one side, it may be due to inappropriately set criteria of the Audiovisual Fund, but may also be to lack of courage due to the established competition represented by SFS, which is only a couple of hours away. It is a unique summer experience, which bursts with true cinephilia and the joy of discovering or possibility of seeing long-time favourite authors and their films on the silver screen.

Even though SFS has a long history, its present form emerged only recently. It was founded in the "golden sixties", in 1963,

originally as a closed event for members of film clubs. In 1975, about 250 spectators visited the cinemas. After moving SFS to Uherské Hradiště, the numbers doubled. In 1992, after an ascending trend, the number dropped back down to 500 spectators only. The reason was the constantly persisting closedness, entrance being possible only with a film club member's card.

From 1993, SFS radically changed the concept of the whole event and under the management of the then director of cinemas in Uherské Hradiště, Jiří Králík, finally opened its doors to all film lovers. With the change of political regime, changes in dramaturgy followed. A significantly higher number of foreign films was screened, the little Moravian town welcomed more international guests, and the number of screening rooms and films also rose.

Nowadays, SFS is the second biggest film event after the IFF Karlovy Vary, with an attendance of around 5,000.

In recent years, the Summer Film School in Uherské Hradiště, except for regular screenings, has put more emphasis on education of the public and professionals. It consists of a so called MiniFAMU, thematic lectures, master classes, or the often underestimated but important and extremely informative, introductions to films before screenings, sometimes more than 10 minutes long. The efforts of organisers to popularise film education thanks to their film selection and qualified pedagogues are certainly a success. Depending on the level of cinephilia, there is something for everyone.

Every year, the biggest star of the event is a rich and varied programme with a remarkable range. In SFS, the individual sections are always divided by topic, nation, genre, period, or by the author under profile. The selection is immensely consistent to the point of being exhaustive. Every year, national and neighbouring cinematographies (like V4 films or a Slovak day) are included. One cannot deny the attempts of organisers to attract a large part of the audience. Within selections and foci, one can always find orientation to a specific period of American production, but also marginal things like Thai contemporary film, or German cinema in 1933. In the event of their

absence, profiled filmmakers, whether living or legendary, are at least represented by their co-workers or family members. As a matter of fact, given the nature of the event, their participation is remarkable. In recent years, for example Aki Kaurismäki, Abbas Kiarostami, Apichatpong Weerasethakul, Terry Gilliam, Peter Greenaway, or Ken Loach among others visited the SFS. They didn't walk the red carpet, but throughout their stay they introduced and discussed their films, or passed on their knowledge in master classes open to the public.

The cherry on top would be the specialised screenings. Organised every year, screenings with live music bring sound to and bring up to date legendary silent films, often by a courageous selection of one of the current Czech bands or musicians. A unique category is the midnight screenings for a braver audience. In recent years, it has been edited in a more systematic way, but still focusing on subversive or slightly perverse genres such as Japanese pink films or zombie horrors. SFS once again proves its love for film and cinephilia obsession with the media, where many other festivals would rather turn their nose up. Such phenomena as blaxploitation, or a film with David Hasselhoff in the main role, parasitising on the success of Star Wars, should be part of the programme of many film events.

Last but not least, SFS is also really finance-friendly to every age or social group. Except for a very favourable price of accreditation, and a system that limits the number of visited screenings just by waiting in line outside the cinema, it offers several options of accessible accommodation, which also works for poorer students, and with truly massive scale and capacity. You can stay in hotels, but also on campuses, in classrooms or gymnasiums. This step might not add a hallmark to the event, which, however, unlike others, doesn't ignore the reality, which is something worth appreciating. Summer Film School in Uherské Hradiště is a paradise for every cinephile without distinction and that's the way it welcomes everybody – with open arms.

MAROŠ BROJO

New media, networks and beyond

Multiplace Festival as an ongoing experiment

In April 2007, when I happened to be in a Bratislava periphery at the Multiplace festival opening party, I had no idea that in a year, I would be organising Multiplace myself. Back then, on the premises of 13 kubikov association, the duo of Michal Kindernay and Gívan Belá presented their network performance and the event felt more like a barbecue with neighbours (though in a slightly industrial and very intellectual neighbourhood), than a festival opening. As I found out later, a group of exceptional people, and considering our (Slovak) environment, strikingly progressive ideas, were in the background of the festival.

Ján Šicko, Mariša Rišková: Hit Bonačić, Remake a Multiplace 2012
Foto: Barbora Lagová



Jan Nálepa: Partitura, Multiplace 2011, Foto: Erik Bartoš

Since then, Multiplace has constantly developed and I am following it directly from the centre of its organisation. The interview with two of the most active organisers – Barbora Šedivá (BŠ) and Slávo Krekovič (SK) – came about via an exchange of a few e-mails. Not only did we want to shortly introduce the Multiplace festival, but the interview also served as a platform to remind us of the history and concept of the festival before its next edition. Multiplace 2014 will take place at the end of May in Bratislava, Brno, Žilina and other cities and we are working like Trojans on the preparations. But first a couple of words about the nature and development of Multiplace.

GP: Multiplace has existed since 2002 as a new media festival, later as a festival of network culture and creativity and culture in the post-digital age. For several years, you have been one of its main organisers. What does the term Multiplace mean for you and what's your position in this initiative?

SK: I see Multiplace as a cultural, artistic, organisational and financial experiment, which arose from out of the need of people who wanted to explore new forms of artistic practices and to examine cultural phenomena related to the emerging media, technologies and networks. It was created because something similar was missing: the world is evolving and we wanted to participate. For us, a bunch of independent friendly organisers and small associations, Multiplace represents a cooperation that crosses geographical and other borders. At a certain stage, we found to our surprise that this activity had grown into quite a big event with many connected organisers in several countries even in the absence of a central budget. It all began in a public living room Buryzone in Bratislava, where its key mover, Mariša Rišková, came up with an idea of a decentralised festival. Our association Atrakt Art became, with its actions, one of organisers and later I myself joined the executive group that was taking care of the overall coordination.

GP: What was the original outline of the festival and how did it evolve? How did its themes, strategies and goals change? Who influenced its appearance the most?

BŠ: Of course, when it comes to content, the festival was developing. In the beginning, we wanted to show that there is an area of art that has its place, authors and spectators in Slovakia as well. Thanks to an open dramaturgy, various associations, organisations and individuals were joining the group (and later a network) of organisers – in 2006 it was as many as thirty organisers. To a large extent it was not only about enrichment of the audience, but about a mutual learning of organisers – sharing of events, coordinated dramaturgy or watching of programmes selected by the others. Big part of Multiplace was taking place on the net and that's where a great part of programme originated. Therefore, the subtitle changed to Festival of Network Culture. We themed what we were doing – networking, openness. A little later, an inspiring discussion on this topic took place – again via e-mail. We didn't get an unambiguous answer to the question that arose from the discussion – about the need for theming networking in times when the net is a natural part of everyday life. The emphasis of the Multiplace platform on the local wasn't out of fear of discovering new things or the incapacity to see further. It was rather an attempt to understand the importance of local actions and discover the foci of free creativity. Later, this was clearly translated into the concept of the project Remake, which covered the 2011 and 2012 editions of the festival with a unifying theme.

GP: At a certain stage, Multiplace was renowned for its open and distributed organisation. How did this open organisation work and what is your experience with this kind of organisation? What are its advantages and disadvantages? Did this strategy prove effective in the case of Multiplace?

BŠ: Step by step, the coordinated action turned into a festival with a regular date, and after a few years, an informal cooperation of individuals turned into a civic association. Of course, this meant entirely different demands on the people who started Multiplace and who gradually took part in its team. Suddenly, it was not “only” about coordination of spaces and association with similar programmes. With my colleagues, we often talked about possibilities and limits offered by various organisational structures. We divided the team into subgroups, we took care of the production part, the programme and even the theory. Each group had its coordinator. Within the groups we worked on individual tasks, the membership was always open, communication publicly accessible and the possibilities for each member to take active part in management enormous. We saw Multiplace as a distributed and open organisation. The principles of “open organisation” were defined by, for example, an initiative of the same name Open organizations (www.open-organizations.org). Behind these attempts one can see the dissatisfaction with the formal power structures that we see in governmental organisations or corporations as well as discontent with dysfunctional informal structures typical in many volunteer and activist groups. Multiplace organisation became a local contribution to this issue, an ongoing experiment, albeit with an uncertain result. Maybe it's not visible on the outside, but that's why its members could test in practice the consensual decision making, open dramaturgy, transparency, non-hierarchical coordination and paradoxically, given the first ideological principles upon which the network was based, also an attempt (or a necessity) to institutionalise. Thanks to the openness, each of these steps was naturally exposed to internal and external criticism. Various stages of development and decay of the organisation are captured in an authentic form in a freely accessible archive of mailing lists (www.multiplace.sk/wiki).

GP: During the twelve years of Multiplace festival's existence, many events have taken place in different institutions. Which one captures the idea of the festival the best? Which event would you like to mention in particular?

SK: It is rather difficult to particularly highlight one event and organiser out of so many that have taken place in numerous cities and countries. Personally, I was always pleased to see how many people were mobilised by the idea of a do-it-yourself festival, considering the only motivation was to do something and where possible work with others. Of course, the sole nature of such a democratic approach influenced the very diverse programme level, and led to closer curatorial concepts, such as the already mentioned international project Remake. The latter was closely related to Multiplace and its idea was based on artists creating new works inspired by the pioneers of media art. The works were then presented at various venues of the festival, which led to a unifying programme line.

BŠ: The Remake project was a reaction to a collaborative research Monoskop, led for some time by the theorist and media artist Dušan Barok. Together with Dušan and Slávo Krekovič we discussed the possibilities of imparting knowledge and information, which Dušan gradually gathered in his database. This brings a new look at various foci of free creativity, artistic communities and personalities of past and present media art of Central and Eastern Europe. Here we can find personalities or happenings with a positive local impact, but often more than a local significance. But how to make this amount of information, often found in unpublished and unknown materials, available to public? Via a database? A publication? Is it possible to finish this research? We decided to grasp the research in a creative way and initiate a series of activities – lectures, debates, art events – which will refer to the pioneering works in various ways. Our aim was therefore the emergence

of new works – through them we attempted to revive or creatively archive certain ideas, or creative processes. We approached contemporary artists and asked them to freely take inspiration from known or forgotten works and personalities of the history of media art. Geographically, we decided to focus the project on Central and Eastern Europe.

GP: Are there similar initiatives or festivals in Central Europe that Multiplace would see as different?

SK: Not so far from here, there is Ars Electronica, Transmediale in Berlin, Enter in Prague or the biennial WRO in Wrocław. Compared to them, Multiplace had one handicap from the beginning, which we tried to turn into an advantage. In our Slovak environment, we somehow weren't able to gather money enough to allow creation of a representative curated review of technology-related art and culture. This is why Multiplace became somehow unique from the point of view of programme and organisation, which has its advantages and disadvantages.

GP: Who were and are the spectators at the Multiplace festival? And what is the festival's relation to the musical scene or visual art scene?

SK: Although I advocate the opinion that the borders are increasingly blurred, different kinds of art, of course, have their viewer and listener circuits. What I like in projects like Multiplace is the connection of activities and contexts across traditional disciplines, given by their common denominator – technologies and their impact on society.

GP: The existence of a cultural server Sanchez is associated with Multiplace. How does this server work and what kind of webs does it host?

BŠ: Besides the festival, the need to educate and attempt to connect and initiate the creation of new works and collaborations, our association started to operate a server – its administrator is the media artist and activist Peter Gonda. Multiplace provides free webhosting for over fifty organisations and individuals. It is a direct support of the scene that arose also thanks to previous activities of this organisation.

GP: How do you see the future of the festival, where can Multiplace evolve? Do you have an idea of its future editions?

SK: There are several options: from preservation of a punk decentralised principal to the transformation to a smaller, curatorially more defined event, or eventually a series of all-year activities. I still don't see a very great possibility of professionalisation following foreign models, therefore everything will depend on the goodwill and motivation of people who are willing to invest their energy in this idea.

BŠ: I just found one of the e-mails that Dušan sent to our mailing list in 2007. It begins with a question “What now?”. This question is still relevant today, but the situation has changed entirely. Apart from natural shifts in life and changes within the team, there is also the social situation and issues that are (or aren't) to be addressed. What we have on our hands is a network of people and contacts, and often these ties are very personal. These are not random contacts, but connections proven by experience and cooperation. Multiplace definitely originated as an opinion platform, but it is not a single movement. The situation is open again.

KATARÍNA GATIALOVÁ

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SHORT TREASURES OF SLOVAKIA

Life is not easy for short films. Neither in terms of media nor cinema distribution. Yet, it is said that good things are hard to find and the truth is, that within last few years, Slovak short films have proved their qualities by collecting awards all over the world.

“The problem that remains is that short film production is directly dependent on legal options of their screenings that are very limited in Slovakia (often, the films don't have the royalties settled, therefore they shouldn't be freely accessible on the internet). Film universities are the dominant producers of these films, but it would be short-sighted to think that all short films are made solely by students. In many countries, for example in Germany, every director must first shoot a short film in order to be able to ask for funding for a feature film. But it is not uncommon that even renowned Hollywood filmmakers produce and direct short films. Even the world's most prestigious film festivals such as Cannes or Berlinale have a short film section in their programme. The American Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences also gives Oscars in the categories of Best Animated Short Film, Best Live Action Short Film and Best Documentary Short Film, which are not intended for students”, comments Peter Badač, producer of an animated short film hit (Pandas), which he presented within Directors' Fortnight in Cannes 2013. KINEČKO notices short films and can appreciate

them. If this goes for you too, have a look at the sample of the best and most awarded that emerged in the short film sector in Slovakia within the last few years. And don't forget to assemble your own original DVD packaging!

Homo Ciris - 20 min
Documentary about a man who wants to become a fish rather than be human.
Director: Janka Mináriková, 2013

Twins - 6 min
Animated story about Siamese twins who fight each other inside but also outside the boxing ring.
Director and animator: Peter Budinský, 2011

Star (Hviezda) - 20 min
Documentary about the amateur actor Ján Slovák and his everyday life.
<http://hviezdafilm.sk/index.php?/trailer/>
Director: Andrej Kolenčík, 2012

Pandas (Pandy) - 13 min
Animated film about the evolution of the biological species panda as a metaphor of the necessity for environmental protection and the issue of how the media perceives current world affairs.
Director and animator: Matúš Vizár, 2013

The Last Bus (Posledný autobus) - 6 min
It's the start of the hunting season. The animals of the forest board a small bus and flee to safety. When hunters stop the bus in the middle of the night, its passengers reveal their true natures in fear of their lives.
Directors: Ivana Laučíková, Martin Snopek, 2011

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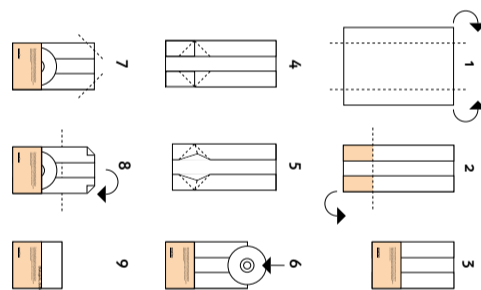
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Life is not easy for short films. Neither in terms of media nor cinema distribution. Yet, it is said that good things are hard to find and the truth is, that within last few years, Slovak short films have proved their qualities by collecting awards all over the world. KINEČKO notices short films and can appreciate them. If this goes for you too, have a look at the sample of the best and most awarded that emerged in the short film sector in Slovakia within the last few years. And don't forget to assemble your own original DVD packaging!

Homo Ciris - 20 min, director Janka Mináriková, 2013
Twins - 6 min, director and animator: Peter Budinský, 2011
Star (Hviezda) - 20 min, director: Andrej Kolenčík, 2012
Pandas (Pandy) - 13 min, director and animator: Matúš Vizár, 2013
The Last Bus (Posledný autobus) - 6 min, directors: Ivana Laučíková, Martin Snopek, 2011

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